



## **SPEECH**

**His Excellency Mr Dharambeer Gokhool G.C.S.K.,  
President of the Republic of Mauritius**

**EVENT: GRAND FINALE AND AWARD CEREMONY –  
LEARN-AI.SCHOOL INNOVATION CHALLENGE**

**VENUE: MAHATMA GANDHI INSTITUTE AUDITORIUM**

**DATE: 15 DECEMBER 2025**

**TIME: 10:00 HOURS**

## **Protocol**

His Excellency Mr. Robert Hungley, GOSK, Vice-President of the Republic, and Mrs. Hungley

Honourable Mahend Gungapersad, PDSM, Minister of Education and Human Resource

Honourable Kugan Parapen, Junior Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity

Mrs. Devina Ramma, Secretary to the President

Mr. Sarat Lallah, GOSK, Chairman of Mauritius Telecom

Mr. Pillay Chedumbrum, Chairman of ICTA

Officials of the Presidency, Ministries

The entire team of Dayforce, Doracrea and Mauritius Telecom

Partners from the Public and Private sectors,

Jury members, rectors, educators and mentors

Distinguished Guests

Dear students,

Members of the Media

All Protocol Observed.

## **Introduction**

Good Morning

On 7<sup>th</sup> December 2024, I became the 8<sup>th</sup> President of our Republic.

On 7<sup>th</sup> December 2025, I completed a year of my mandate.

Today, 15<sup>th</sup> December 2025, just a week after, we are meeting to celebrate a landmark event of what the future of our Republic will be - a future to be shaped by our youth, a future where our youth will be in the driving seat.

A future which will be defined by AI first and then, with the passage of time, by:

- Artificial Superintelligence (ASI)
- Human-AI Integration
- Conscious AI

With your permission before I proceed any further, I would like to pay a special tribute to a person who laid the very foundations of the future we are building.

On this day, 15<sup>th</sup> December, 1985, he left us.

His name is SSR-the father of our Independence and of our Nation.

I dedicate today's event to his memory.

Today's event – the finale of the Learn-AI Innovation Challenge - aims to prepare our youth to ride the technological wave with confidence, responsibility, integrity and clairvoyance.

### **Backdrop and context**

Before I continue, allow me to provide some context and backdrop to this project.

When I became President, I had to quickly figure out my mission.

The message I received both from within and outside our National Assembly and beyond, from our diaspora, was clear and precise.

It was Nation Building and National Unity- a sine qua non condition for our development and progress.

And our students and youth were expected to play a catalytic role in that process.

Student and youth engagement became an important component of my overall mission.

Among the many initiatives that we took at State House, I shall mention first, the National Essay Competition, undertaken in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Human Resource -a highly successful and impactful project which will now go into its second edition.

Secondly, the Learn-AI Innovation Challenge, in collaboration with two Ministries-Education and ICT.

Today we are meeting to celebrate the successful and impactful completion of yet another path breaking project in the field of digital transformation of our Republic.

Digital transformation cannot be the sole responsibility of Government and Public institutions.

They will do their share.

For too long, people have asked what the Government can do for them.

Time now has come for people to ask what they can do for the country.

This was the spirit that gave birth to this project, when two of our citizens- Vassen Dorasami of DoraCrea and Vidia Mooneegan of Dayforce- came over to the State House to discuss with your President how they could advance the AI Agenda.

They presented the project, followed by a brainstorming exercise.

The proposal was discussed with the two Ministries, finalized, resources mobilized, resistance neutralized, coordination and implementation done according to a set time frame.

A real-life example- a case study- of successful project development and management.

## **A successful national AI experiment**

Today, we are not merely concluding a competition. We are witnessing the outcome of a successful national AI experiment.

In launching the project, we wanted to test whether our young people can not only use AI, but can also use it responsibly, creatively and meaningfully to address real challenges facing our country.

The answer has been unequivocal: **Yes, they can and they are ready.**

**Our students have demonstrated maturity, discipline, and the ability to convert national priorities into actionable, innovative solutions; just as we hoped when we first launched this initiative.**

## **What the Projects Reveal About Our Youth**

You have shown innovation not imitation

Not fear of technology, but confidence.

Not abstract ideas, but solutions grounded in the realities of healthcare, education, food security, public service, road safety and the blue economy.

At the launch, I underlined five national priorities: drugs, disability inclusion, cultural harmony, digitalisation and international credibility.

Today's projects touch on every one of these.

Some teams addressed road safety and addiction. Others focused on inclusive learning, sustainability, and public services.

Your work strengthens national credibility because it demonstrates that Mauritius does not only speak of innovation. We actually practise it.

These projects tell us something important about our youth.

You have shown that transformation is not confined to boardrooms or policy documents.

It is happening in our classrooms.

You have demonstrated that the future is not waiting to happen.

They are actively shaping it.

This is the same creative genius I spoke about at the launch. It is the unique blend of resilience, resourcefulness and imagination that defines Mauritian youth.

Today, you have confirmed that this genius is not theoretical. It is real, it is tangible, and it is already influencing our nation's development.

Through the Mauritius Digital Transformation Blueprint, we have affirmed that technology must serve people, strengthen inclusion and reinforce trust in our institutions.

You have shown that AI, when guided by ethics, empathy and intelligence, becomes a tool that amplifies human purpose.

This is precisely the direction Mauritius must take.

At the launch, we reminded ourselves that AI must be a bridge and never a barrier. Today, you have shown what that bridge looks like: a bridge between creativity and service, between innovation and responsibility, between technology and humanity.

### **The Power of Partnership**

There is a saying that goes as follows: if you want to fast, go alone.

If you want to go far, go together

You have shown the potential and the power of partnerships: Strong Public-Private-People Partnership –the 4Ps.

The Office of the President, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation, our industry partners, trainers, mentors and sponsors have demonstrated that when institutions work together with trust and clarity of purpose, results follow.

To our educators and mentors, your role has been decisive.

You did not simply teach tools. You nurtured confidence, discipline and critical thinking and provided leadership.

At the launch, I emphasised that transformation cannot be carried by any single institution. What we see today affirms that principle. Government has provided vision and access. Industry has provided expertise and support. Civil society has brought creativity. And our young people have brought courage and imagination. This is the true meaning of a whole-of-nation approach

### **A Message to the Students**

To our students: Let me speak to you directly.

More than a competition, it has been a challenge. No winners, no losers. Only Champions. It is the beginning.

The ideas you have presented must not remain prototypes.

They deserve refinement, courage and persistence. Some of you will become engineers, entrepreneurs, researchers, policymakers or educators.

Whatever path you choose, carry with you one responsibility.

Use technology to serve the common good.

The true measure of innovation is not how advanced it is, but how many lives it improves.

Earlier this year, many of you wrote essays for the National Essay Competition. You reflected deeply on ethics, risks, opportunities and responsibilities. Today you have moved from ideas to implementation. Maintain this continuum: reflect, design, build, evaluate, and improve. That is the mindset of leaders.

### **Responsibility, Ethics and Leadership**

Mauritius needs builders of solutions, guardians of ethics and leaders who understand that progress must be inclusive and human centred.

The future of Mauritius does not lie in technology alone. It lies in the values, intelligence and integrity of those who wield it.

The world is entering an era of intense debate on AI governance. As we prepared for the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) and broader international engagements, we wanted the world to see that Mauritius is not a passive observer but an ethical, thoughtful contributor. Your projects reinforce this image of our country.

### **Beyond the Finals: What Comes Next**

Allow me to add an important point as we look ahead.

Learn-Ai Innovation Challenge is no longer just a competition. It is becoming a **National Ecosystem**.

From your feedback, your passion and your output, three next steps are emerging:

1. **A National AI Strategy for Education**; where your insights will feed into teacher empowerment, digital literacy, ethics-by-design, and equitable AI access.
2. **A Learn-AI Incubation Pathway**; so that top projects do not simply end here but continue through mentorship, technical refinement and pilot implementation.
3. **A National Repository of Youth Innovation** to showcase prototypes, datasets, code and models developed by our students for the public good.

**These steps will ensure continuity, scale and national impact.**

### **Closing Reflections**

I congratulate every student who participated in this journey, every teacher who believed in them, and every partner who invested in their potential.

Together, let us continue building a Mauritius that is confident in innovation, firm in ethics, and united in purpose, **as one people and as one nation, in peace, justice and liberty.**

I thank you for your attention and wish you all a very happy and prosperous New Year 2026.