

Will AI Eclipse Human Roles?

A Mauritius Lens on Job Shifts and Societal Waves

In 1984, my grandfather—Moun Persad Kisnah—took me to see the first ATM machine at the State Bank in Port Louis. I was a boy, watching adults queue nervously before this strange metal box that dispensed cash without a teller.

"Beta," my dada said quietly, "this machine is going to replace many jobs." I looked up at him. "What will happen to those people?"

He placed a hand on my shoulder. "They will learn new skills—just as our ancestors did when they came from India and all corners of the world as indentured labourers. They adapted. They built. And so will we."

Four decades later, standing at the threshold of another technological wave, I find myself returning to that conversation.

As 2025 draws to a close, families across Mauritius gather around tables laden with briani, vindaye, and the shared warmth of year-end celebrations. The Flamboyants are in bloom, painting our roadsides crimson. It is a season for gratitude—for what we have built, for those we love, and for the resilience that has carried this island through every storm.

Yet even amid the festive cheer, a quieter conversation unfolds. At dinner tables from Curepipe to Port Mathurin, between sips of aloqua and beer, the question surfaces: *Will these new technologies take my job?*

It is a fear

echoed across the globe. And it deserves an honest answer—one that looks beyond the headlines and examines what this shift truly means for Mauritius.

The Great Reshaping

The International Monetary Fund estimates that roughly 60% of jobs in advanced economies are exposed to technological change—not eliminated, but reshaped. Half stand to benefit from better tools; the other half face genuine disruption. Goldman Sachs projects 300 million positions globally could be affected by 2030, yet the same research suggests these shifts could raise global GDP by 7% if new industries emerge.

For Mauritius, this is not abstract. Our BPO and administrative sectors—employing tens of thousands in Ebene—sit squarely in the zone of exposure. Studies suggest up to 30% of routine back-office tasks could be automated within years. A sobering reality.

But automation does not mean annihilation. My dada understood this. ATMs changed job descriptions, not the need for bank staff. Spreadsheets transformed accounting without eliminating accountants. Routine tasks fade; demand grows for judgment, creativity, and human connection.

When America Sneezes

This technological wave collides with economic uncertainty. The United States shows signs of slowing—growth tapering, consumer spending uneven. The old saying holds: "When the US sneezes, the world catches a cold."

For Mauritius, linked through trade, tourism, and financial services, a US downturn could tighten belts. Export markets may shrink. Tourism arrivals could soften.

Yet technology can become a shield. PwC research shows industries embracing these shifts see revenue per worker growing three times faster than laggards. The question is not whether change will come—it is whether Mauritius chooses to lead.

Electricians Are the Future

A senior engineer recently offered a deceptively simple observation: "Electricians are the future."

It sounds counterintuitive. But consider what powers every data centre, every cloud server: electricity. As digital systems scale, the need for electricians, fibre-splicers, and grid engineers grows in lockstep.

Our push toward 60% renewable energy by 2030 will require thousands of skilled hands—people who can wire solar installations and keep the grid stable. These jobs cannot be automated away. They require presence, judgment, and craft.

The Budget 2025 investments, estimated to generate nearly 4,000 technology-related positions, are not just for computer scientists. They include the technicians and maintainers who keep complex systems running.

Rodrigues: The Untapped Engine

When we speak of digital transformation, Port Louis and Ebene dominate. But perhaps our most compelling opportunity lies 560 kilometres east.

Rodrigues offers something valuable: a young, adaptable population; a culture of resilience; and room to grow. With the MARS submarine cable now linking the island to global networks, and the planned Technopark at Baladirou, Rodrigues could become a genuine node in our digital ecosystem. Mauritius Telecom's myGPT pilot—tested with students there—demonstrates how technology can reach the underserved first.

Rodrigues does not compete with Mauritius. It complements us.

Lessons from Singapore's Alleys

Singapore's Lorong AI—a co-working hub launched in 2025—brings together practitioners for workshops and community events. "Lorong" means alley in Malay: intimate, neighbourhood-scale innovation.

Mauritius need not copy the model exactly. But the principle matters: physical spaces where developers, civil servants, and tradespeople experiment together. Such hubs signal that innovation happens here—not only in Silicon Valley, but in Port Louis and Port Mathurin.

Macron's Visit: A Signal Worth Heeding

President Emmanuel Macron's state visit in late November sent a clear message: France sees the Indian Ocean as a strategic axis for investment and technology cooperation.

France is investing heavily in research and startups across the Francophone world. Mauritius—bilingual, stable, well-governed—could position itself as a regional test market and training hub.

Turning handshakes into outcomes requires action: talent pipelines, co-funded research, computing partnerships. Linking French capital with Mauritian infrastructure could give us outsized leverage.

Skills: The Bridge We Must Build

The pattern is clear globally. Where workers learn new tools, wages trend upward. Where they do not, technology becomes downward pressure.

For Mauritius, this translates into priorities:

Practical reskilling. Short certi-



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fications for electricians, network technicians, and cybersecurity specialists often outperform degrees in employment outcomes.

Applied education. Programmes blending technology with domain knowledge—finance, healthcare, agriculture—create talent that solves local problems.

Social safety nets. Controlled pilots for income support can give workers room to retrain without desperation.

Ethics boards. A neutral, multidisciplinary body can guide citizen protections and accountability.

Opportunity Greater Than Peril

The evidence points away from replacement and toward something more demanding: most jobs change, some vanish, new ones appear, and the real question is how quickly we help people cross the bridge.

Mauritius has always adapted. From sugar to tourism, from textiles to financial services, we have reinvented ourselves before.

As families gather this season, the question is not whether technology will eclipse human roles—but whether we are preparing our children for the world being built around them.

My dada knew the answer forty years ago. They will learn new skills. They will adapt. They will build. And so will we.

What concerns you most about this technological shift—job security, fairness, youth opportunity, or something else? Your perspective will help shape a community forum on the future of work in Mauritius.

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