



‘Automation to alter jobs landscape in 5 years’

While the current wave of disruption may threaten entry-level workers, experts are of the opinion that the next phase of automation would impact white-collar jobs like doctors, teachers, etc

ENR ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, MARCH 29

THE IMPENDING adoption of automation across various industries has worried some sections of the society when it comes to the loss of jobs it may cause. While some analysts and experts have said that the impact in India will not be as bad as being talked about, some are of the view that it is necessary, and people might have to re-skill themselves to protect their jobs. A study conducted by EY, Ficci and Nasscom suggests that in the year 2022 about 9 per cent of the workforce would be deployed in jobs that do not exist today, 37 per cent would be deployed in jobs that have radically changed skill sets, and about 54 per cent would fall under unchanged job category.

However, the study which was published in September 2017, has also detailed a number of job roles that may be rendered redundant in various sectors. By 2022, the study said, job roles in the information technology

services sector such as voice-based services (call centre agents), data entry operators, document processing, system administrators may be automated.

With rising adoption of automation and artificial intelligence, number of low-skilled workers in India's IT & BPO sector are expected to witness a 35 per cent decrease by 2022, according to a report by US-based firm HIS Research. The report pegged that from 2.4 million low-skilled workers in these sectors in 2016, the growing adoption of automation could cause the number of jobs to fall to 1.7 million in 2022.

Similarly, the job roles threatened by automation in the automotive sector are welding technician, painting technician, press machine operators, inspection assistants and in-plant material handler. In the retail segment, jobs such as cashier, inventory associate, sales representative and stock boy could be threatened by automation. This is already being witnessed in the US, where e-commerce giant Amazon opened its first physical store without any employees. The super-

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market is equipped with sensors and computers doing the jobs that are handled by humans in a conventional store.

Job roles including packer, checker, folder, helper/material handler in the textile and apparel sector are expected to be threatened by automation, the study titled 'Future of Jobs in India - A 2022 Perspective' pointed out, adding that in the banking and financial services segment, entry-level jobs such as data entry operator, data verification personnel, teller, cashier and underwriter may be automated.

Nasscom, the Indian association representing software companies, had earlier said that its members and their employees need to 're-skill or perish' considering the chal-

lenges on account of automation. Nasscom had said that about 40 per cent of the 3.9 million people employed by India's IT sector would need to be re-skilled over the next five years for them to keep their jobs. Nasscom also pointed out that it had identified new skills such as big data analytics, cloud and cyber-security services, internet-of-things, among others as areas that would create job roles going ahead. It said that a number of its member firms including TCS, Infosys, Accenture, Genpact were undertaking a skills initiative that looked at training employees across all levels.

While the current wave of automation may threaten entry-level staffers, particularly in sectors involving technology services and manufacturing, experts expect that the next wave of automation - which may come as a result of new age technologies such as 5G, internet-of-things, and artificial intelligence - could impact white-collar jobs such as doctors, teachers, etc. 'If the economy is able to create new people's skills, and allow them to create new jobs and new company infra-

structure, there will be more jobs created than lost. Historically, if you see, technology has created more jobs, that are different from the jobs it has destroyed. When the first computers came in, a lot of people involved with data entry were removed. But then it also created a lot of different jobs," a senior economist told The Indian Express. "Let's assume, we employ more intelligent AI learning techniques in education. One hand it will increase access to education for many people, which is good, but on the other hand you might say it has the potential to remove jobs of so many people. But the same teachers can do something more, and different," he added.

US-based technology major IBM has invented an artificial intelligence system called "Watson", which, during its test-phase, where analysed 1000 cancer diagnoses, was able to recommend some treatment plans in 90 per cent of the cases as was by other oncologists. The system's computing power alone gave it an edge over the human doctors in form of the relevant material it was able to consume to arrive at a conclusion.