Center for Strategic and International Studies

Event
"Previewing India's AI Impact Summit with MeitY Secretary S. Krishnan"

DATE
Monday, December 8 at 9:00 a.m. ET

FEATURING
S. Krishnan
Secretary, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India

CSIS EXPERTS
Gregory C. Allen
Senior Advisor, Wadhwani AI Center, CSIS

CSIS | CENTER FOR STRATEGIC & INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Gregory Allen:	Good morning. I'm Gregory Allen, a senior adviser with the Wadhwani AI Center here at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.
	Today we've got a very exciting conversation previewing the India AI Impact Summit. And we've got the perfect individual to give this overview. It is Secretary Krishnan, who is the Secretary of India's Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, which is playing a leading role in organizing the India AI Impact Summit and setting AI policy for India as a whole.
	Secretary Krishnan brings more than three decades of experience in public service, having joined the Indian Administrative Service in 1989. Prior to his current role, he served as the additional chief secretary of the Industries, Investment Promotion, and Commerce Department in the government of Tamil Nadu.
	Secretary Krishnan, thank you so much for joining us today.
Secretary S. Krishnan:	Thank you. Thank you for having me.
Mr. Allen:	Yes. It's our pleasure.
	So I think, of course, in India MeitY is incredibly well known, and to the world's AI industry it's increasingly well known. But for those in the audience who are not familiar with MeitY, could you please describe what the ministry is and how it fits into India's broader technology, innovation, and policy ecosystem?
Sec. Krishnan:	MeitY is an acronym which is basically Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology. Since it was first founded in the mid-'80s or late '70s, it's undergone many, many transformations. It was originally just the Department of Electronics, and then information technology came in. For a while it was just the Department of Information Technology. And finally, it is the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.
	Our brief basically consists of looking at the electronics industry, all that is used as contributing to information technology – not necessarily auto electronics or medical electronics and stuff like that, but all the electronics which goes into, you know, the entire semiconductor space and all the consumer electronics, IT hardware, mobile phones, all of those end-user instruments. So that is on the electronics side.
	On the information technology side, we administer what is called the Information Technology Act of the government of India. And that sets

policy on how various digital operations take place, recognition for digitally signed documentation, instruments, and so on; plus regulation of all of these services, regulation of social media. All of those aspects of it comes within what we do. In addition, there's a promotional role for the information technology, IT, and ICP industry in – and ITES, IT-enabled services industry, in the country.

In addition, we have a mandate for cybersecurity, especially that which relates to cybersecurity technology and the various cyber law – as I said, information technology act – so the entire space of cyber law is something that comes within the remit of this ministry.

So these are broadly – and, of course, internet governance and we are the counterparty on internet governance globally. Currently, of course, we also look at AI because that's the –we have an emerging technologies division which looks at things like AI, Internet of Things, blockchain, and so on.

So this is, broadly, the mandate that we have. What we don't have compared to some of the other countries is the communications part of it. That comes under the department of telecommunications and the broadcasting part of it which comes under the ministry of information and broadcasting.

In some of the jurisdictions they don't have the electronics part but then they have the communications and the broadcasting part. That is not part of what my ministry does here in India.

Mr. Allen: Great. And I do want to drill down into the India AI part of the story and MeitY's incredibly important role there. So what specifically is MeitY's role in India's AI policy landscape writ large?

You mentioned the emerging technologies division but what kind of role do you play? Are you the regulator? Are you the investor? Are you the promoter? All of the above? None of the above? Please help us understand.

Sec. Krishnan: We'd like to look at ourselves primarily as a promoter supporting the development of this particular sector and a facilitator for getting this to happen with support from a number of stakeholders including private companies, academic institutions, research organizations, organizations like yours.

We collaborate with the Wadhwani Foundation and other similar organizations in trying to get – coordinate between all parties to make this happen. So it's not like what a conventional ministry in the

government of India does, one of the older world ministries which would primarily look at regulating the sector or just running programs and schemes to support it.

We do some regulation. We do some expenditure in terms of specific programs which support it. We run the IndiaAI Mission, which has an outlay of about – close to about $1.25 billion equivalent. We do that.

But in addition, we sort of coordinate and ensure that there's collaboration amongst a range of institutions through various policy nudges and support for various initiatives and that's how we push it forward.

Mr. Allen: Great. And so we'll come back to MeitY and especially to this IndiaAI Mission, which I think is doing some fabulous work, but let's turn for a moment just to India and AI's role in the economy of India.

So, from your perspective, what sectors of India's economy have seen the most rapid AI adoption and what impact has the adoption had on those sectors?

Sec. Krishnan: I think there are certain segments and naturally the IT/IP sector is where I think most of the immediate adoption takes place, and naturally that's one space; the finance and fintech sectors, another important sector where there's a lot of adoption of AI.

Likewise, in medical technologies and especially in diagnostics, et cetera, there's significant adoption of AI. People are already starting to use it fairly extensively. Our emphasis right from the word go, at least in the AI space, has been to see how it can be used most effectively in the more productive sectors of the economy where it can support, enhance productivity and efficiency, and these are segments where the uptake has been particularly good.

What we understand from some statistics that we've seen from other studies has been that while globally about 70 percent of AI used thus far is basically by end-use consumers, most of it for, you know, some personal productivity work or entertainment – I mean, creating more cat videos or something like that. (Laughter.) That's been where the adoption has been much greater.

In India, the adoption has been much greater in more productive uses so only about 40 percent is that kind of use. Most of them have used it for some productive purpose. So that is a way that the adoption in India has been led.

Part of it is also because of the people who have adopted it. It's very extensive and there is a fairly well-trained STEM workforce which has taken to it. And that – I think that's what determines the way that this has been adopted.

And that, I think, has been critical in the way that AI has moved forward in India, and many players in India look at it as the possible applications that can be made with AI and how these applications can be deployed. And even in governance, it's been extensively adopted. People have used it in a range of ways.

Some of it is very inventive. They put the cameras on, you know, bike riders who go and deliver stuff. You know, retail delivery is a big thing now in India, so they put cameras on that and monitor the condition of roads – whether the road conditions are good, whether the work's been completed, and how long. And so various kinds of innovative and inventive applications have been found.

Mr. Allen: That's great. And OpenAI recently disclosed that specifically within the AI domain of large language models they have more than 800 million weekly average users, and India is the second-largest userbase for ChatGPT in the world already, which I thought was a really interesting illustration of just how enthusiastically India is adopting AI.

One other way that India stands out, I think, is that it has a startup community. Among developing countries, I think India really stands out as having a vibrant venture capital ecosystem and a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem. And so within the startup community's activity in AI, what areas of innovation stand out most to you? And where do you see Indian companies competing effectively at the global level?

Sec. Krishnan: I think our startup ecosystem is currently the third largest in the world, and there are a large number of startups which are starting up all the time including especially in the tech space. And again, many of them use AI in a variety of applications, although they may not be AI companies by themselves. But they do use AI for a variety of the operations that they are aiming for.

Most of – many startups are attempting to figure out solutions for real-world problems using technology, including AI. And what they are looking at is developing applications which can then be deployed. And I think that is where they would be most effective in competing because ultimately, you know, even if there is a model which has been developed – a large language model or a foundation model which has been developed – and there are – you know, there is the infrastructure in

terms of the compute facility being available, unless there's an application which somebody actually uses it's not going to make a lot of sense for people or even for enterprises. And I think that's where Indian startups will step in in a big way, create those kind of applications, and make sure that they get used more extensively. And I think that's where they have the real chance to compete globally as well.

Mr. Allen: Great.

And I think one datapoint that I thought was so interesting recently was an October 2025 Pew Research survey in which 50 percent of U.S. respondents said they were more concerned than excited about the rise of AI in daily life, and in India this was only 19 percent, reflecting a much higher degree of optimism about AI among the population. With there being so many narratives about AI being a threat to employment and jobs and other issues, you know, what do you think is creating this general sense of AI optimism in India?

Sec. Krishnan: I think there are two or three things. I think first is the starting point. I think what we need to understand is previous revolutions – industrial revolutions of various kinds - basically replaced manual labor, and they tended to automate things more and more but it provided relief from drudgery and manual labor. Now for the first time with AI cognitive and white-collar work is likely to be actually replaced, and that threat suddenly seems much more potent. And since the total number of white-collar jobs as a proportion of total jobs in the economy is much greater in more developed countries and in Western countries compared to India, I think straightaway that's one reason why in India we see it less of a threat and more of an opportunity – more for, you know, enhancing productivity of people who work in various fields and trying to catch up. So that's, I think, one important thing.

And the second thing, really, is that we look at AI as probably the one opportunity to leapfrog and try and, you know, make sure that development and growth accelerates in key sectors of the economy so that eventually we can also reach the ranks of at least a middle-income/upper-middle-income country, so some semblance of actually achieving that goal. And I think that is a huge opportunity which people think can work. And not just – I mean, this is – this is so amongst policymakers, this is so amongst opinion makers. This is the way our academia and those organizations think. And amongst the broader student population and others there's a fair amount of excitement in the way that this can get adopted and we can move forward. And that's one of the key causes for the optimism.

And interestingly enough, our prime minister has also gone on record repeatedly. He's told us and he's also spoken in many fora saying that, at least as far as AI is concerned, we should not look at it with fear but we should look at it with a positive outlook in terms of what it can contribute to the next stage of development. Which is why our summit, the AI summit which we are hosting early next year, is called the AI Impact Summit. We have tried to move away from the emphasis on safety and other issues to actually focusing on what it can do for human development and humanity at large.

Mr. Allen: Great. And we're going to spend a good amount of time talking about the India AI Impact Summit in a moment.

But before we get there, I wanted to ask one more question about India's AI sector, which is what challenges you're facing. So when you think about the biggest challenge that India faces when it comes to AI adoption and innovation, what stands out for you?

Sec. Krishnan: I think the big – two big issues. One big issue is about the infrastructure itself. We will have to set up adequate compute facility. In the IndiaAI Mission, we have adopted an interesting approach to setting up this compute facility. We have tried to say that – I mean, there was a thought that we would just pay for a portion of the cost of establishing compute in the country, but then we felt that it would be a limiting factor. So we took an opposite approach and we said that instead of a viability gap from – for a private sector operator who comes and sets it up, we will support the demand for AI so that private sector operators will set up AI capacity and who offer it for use at a particular agreed-upon price or contracted price. We sort of then subsidized the users – particularly innovators, startup founders, researchers, and students – so that they are able to access. And I think the buildout of this capacity is something which needs to happen really quickly so that we don't fall behind. It's an interesting model that we have, and we have to solve for this problem of the buildout and, you know, making sure that enough of the processing and compute capacity is made available in the country.

Availability of power is not such a serious problem. Clearly, energy is an issue across the world when it comes to AI, and it's a limiting factor in India because the size of the overall grid and the availability of a lot of renewable power – both solar and wind – makes it a little easier to make green power available for – renewable power available for AI datacenters and so on. So we expect that that would be an attractive point.

The other issue, really, is – other two issues. One aspect, of course, is having models which are not biased in the sense of which take in Indian

data, which are trained on adequate Indian data, data in Indian languages so that the cultural and linguistic specificities of India are captured. And I think that is important from another aspect, and we will have to slowly move in that direction.

And the third aspect, of course, is the training has to take place and enough data has to be available in a usable form. India, of course, generates a lot of data, but making available enough data in usable form is a crucial challenge. And I think that's something which to the India AI Mission and we should be working towards.

Mr. Allen: Excellent.

So coming back to MeitY and its role in the India AI policy ecosystem, who else is important in India's AI policy ecosystem besides MeitY? And what roles do they occupy in governing AI?

Sec. Krishnan: Well, we have – we have a range of stakeholders within government who are closely involved with what we are doing on AI policy. We have the principal scientific advisor to the prime minister, who oversees some of these areas of what we are attempting to. We work closely with the Department of Science and Technology, the Department of Higher Education, Department of School Education, the Ministry of Skilling. So many of these stakeholders are very important to create the base for use of AI.

Likewise, when it comes to the application space our stakeholders include the Department of Health and Family Welfare, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, our ministry which supports the MSMEs – micro, medium, and small industries.

So all of these are important players who coordinate with us. So we have coordination mechanisms and bodies which interact regularly on this. And of course, there's oversight from the prime minister's office directly and the Cabinet office in order to see that we are on the right track.

Mr. Allen: Great.

So in early November MeitY led the release of India's AI Governance Guidelines, so congratulations on getting that document out. This was a 68-page report that details key principles, recommendations, an action plan, and practical guidelines for industry and regulators. So what high-level objectives does this report set for India's AI policy?

Sec. Krishnan: I think the most important thing is to emphasize that we don't want to rush headlong into any tight regulation on AI. I think there's a lot of

room for innovation. What the report emphasizes is that there are many existing frameworks, legal frameworks, which can be adapted to regulate AI.

Just to cite an example, if we are concerned about misrepresentation and deepfakes, under the IT Act and under the IT rules there are provisions to deal with it and we can deal fairly effectively with misrepresentation.

Where it comes to data privacy and protecting data of individuals, we recently notified the digital data – Digital Personal Data Protection Act, the DPDP Act, and the rules have been notified, and they'll be coming into force in a graded way over the next 18 months. And that is also an important regulation on how data can be used by a number of companies in that space.
So some of these aspects of AI or some of the aspects which come up in regulating certain types – certain issues with AI are already on the statute book and can be used effectively. And therefore, we need not, you know, legislate fresh in those areas.

There are certain other areas we believe it's a little premature to legislate. And we will – if need be at an appropriate stage and based on our understanding of how such legislation has worked in other jurisdictions, if need be we will regulate but we are not going to rush headlong into trying to put crimps on the way that AI would develop. And so this is – this is a graded approach that we are taking.

And there's also a lot of emphasis on voluntary compliance. And we have found in the course of the way that we have administered social media there's been a lot of voluntary compliance by the companies themselves, and that is a record we can build on to make sure that companies come forward voluntarily to follow certain standards.

So these are – these are some of the guiding principles that the AI governance report contains. And these are recommendations which have been made to MeitY and to the government, and we will consider these recommendations and act on that basis. And we of course – as I said, if there is a need to step in at some point we would be ready to do it, but we don't want to rush headlong into it just as yet.

Mr. Allen: Yes.

So, in addition to not rushing headlong into additional regulation and emphasizing voluntary compliance and standards, what are some of the concrete policy recommendations that the report makes?

Sec. Krishnan: I think the concrete policy recommendation is using tools better and use them to the extent possible – do not try to come in with newer ones unless it's absolutely essential – and continue to engage with all stakeholders to make sure that the voluntary aspect of it is strengthened and emphasized.

Mr. Allen: Great.

So now let's turn to the AI Impact Summit, which I'm sure a lot of our audience is interested in hearing about. Let's start at a high level. Can you give us an overview of the summit's main goals?

Sec. Krishnan: As I told you, the summit itself is called the AI Impact Summit. We have transitioned from the AI Safety Summit at Bletchley Park in the U.K., which was the first of them, in November of '23.

Then we had the Innovation Summit in Korea. Then we had the Action Summit in Paris earlier this year in February, and so now we move to the Impact Summit, which basically people, planet, progress is the broad theme, which is fundamentally about what the human impact that AI has and what is it that – how do we look at the human impact and how do we ensure that the positive impacts are magnified and increased while the negative impacts are contained.

That would be the main sort of broad theme that we would operate towards, and plan it in terms of, you know, the resilience framework that is needed for adoption of technology. I think time and again it's proved to us that when we adopt technology we should do it in a resilient way in terms of the kind of supply chains we have, in fact, in terms of the kind of redundancy we have so that we don't become over dependent on any one aspect or any one geography.

So that is another key message and, of course, how do we take it for growth and development and progress in general and how do we push forward to make sure that it includes more and more people.

I think inclusion and – both geographically in terms of various countries of the world, in terms of, you know, the rich and the poor, in terms of the excluded communities – gender, people with disabilities – all of those aspects are critical, and especially in a country like India with such a large population and with such a differentiation in the initial attainment levels it's very important that the way the technology gets adopted and used emphasizes inclusion.

So I think these are the key high-level goals that we are looking at, addressing through the AI Impact Summit and, of course, making sure

that resources are adequately available and available in a democratized fashion is, again, an important goal of the summit.

Mr. Allen: That's great. And, notably, this will be the first global AI Summit series to take place in a Global South country. You mentioned the goal of inclusion, but how else does that shape India's goals for the event?

Sec. Krishnan: I think one way – one, of course, is that India wants to emphasize that, you know, using AI as a technology is the one opportunity that many countries of the Global South really have to leapfrog in the development path. I think that is the key message. And that, you know, we can do it ourselves to a significant extent with some support by adopting frugal ways of deploying the technology.

Some of the models which have emerged from India including the way that we've attempted to build a compute facility, including the way that we are building our own foundational models and so on, I think illustrate the possibility of doing it frugally, and our own experience of – with the digital public infrastructure and digital public infrastructure with an overlay of AI is something that can actually make a significant difference to many countries in the Global South.

And I think that is another key message that we would like to amplify through the summit and I think this is the – what India can offer and what Indian institutions and companies can offer would also be a key message that we would put out.

Mr. Allen: So there's two things in the answer that you just provided that I'd like to ask you to elaborate upon.

The first is you said that you think that AI is an opportunity to leapfrog in the development path, and I think most people who are familiar with the development leapfrog story think about the example of telecommunications in which many developing countries did not build out significant landline telephone infrastructure; they leapfrogged straight to cellular telephony. So, in your mind, when you think about AI as a leapfrog opportunity for developing countries, what sorts of examples or use cases are in your mind for that opportunity?

Sec. Krishnan: See, AI, in a way, is a horizontal technology. It's a technology which would impact all sectors and across different sectors, and a huge opportunity to actually enhance productivity in each of these sectors, which is why in the beginning I emphasized that we are trying to see whether – what impact can it make in each of the productive sectors of the economy like agriculture, like manufacturing, like health care, like education, and so on.

And given the limitations of capability that many countries of the Global South may have, AI gives you that opportunity to enhance productivity for those who operate in that space. So if you're looking at you don't have enough doctors but if you look to apply AI as diagnostic tools to support doctors you could get far better outcomes for the limited personnel that you have.

Likewise, if you're looking at teaching and, you know, if you use AI tools and you're able to deliver better pedagogy and better education to children, to students, then that could make a significant difference in that sector.

And the other part of it is, especially in the governance space and in certain other spaces, we could – I mean, it's not about replacing people but with the enhanced productivity you could develop and you could deliver services which we could have never imagined before, something which you would not have thought was possible, things like predictive governance in terms of understanding what people may need and make sure that it gets delivered ahead of time or delivered effectively in order to see that issues are sorted out.

So I think that's the big opportunity that it provides and that's the big opportunity that we would like to use to make sure that, you know, we are able to harness the technology, to enhance productivity, and enhance growth thereby.

Mr. Allen: Amazing. And your story about digital public infrastructure – during my recent trip to India in November I heard about this an enormous amount. It's clear that India has some real success stories in the case of digital public infrastructure and that this is a story that you want to tell to the world.

So can you please – for those in the audience who are not familiar with these stories – can you just elaborate on what digital public infrastructure is as an idea and what are some noteworthy examples of it in India, and then how do you anticipate it might work in the case of AI specifically?

Sec. Krishnan: I think there are two or three things which are critical for digital public infrastructure. First, in a country like India to establish identity itself sometimes is a challenge for a person. A large country, different places – how do I prove that I am Krishnan, right? I mean, to the government and to other agencies.

So a biometric mechanism of actually establishing identity with privacy

fully protected and data completely safe, which is what our Aadhaar system, the Universal Identity Authority of India, which does the Aadhaar system, has managed to achieve.

Now, once you have the identity which is established you can ride a number of services on top of that. So what we have managed to do is ensure that telecommunications – you mentioned about how the telecommunications revolutions took place. From a time when even, say, 25 years ago or 30 years ago it was very difficult – even 25 years ago it was actually difficult and – for somebody to get a telephone connection in India because it was strictly rationed, there weren't enough operators, and all kinds of problems.
Today, you can get it very, very easily. Everyone has it and it's meant so much for productivity, particularly for people in the unorganized sector, for people who work for daily wages, who have to go out and find work on a daily basis.

It has been transformative for them in terms of how they do their business every day and how they are able to conduct it every day. Reduced friction costs tremendously, reduced wastage of time tremendously and enhanced their productivity significantly. So that – so a layer of identity, a layer of what is called the Aadhaar, and then mobile.

And then the third element is Jan Dhan, which is the way that bank accounts were opened and people were plugged into the formal economic system. So today we have more than a billion people who use telephone connections in the country. There are more than a billion telephone connections.

There are – Aadhaar, of course, is close to universal. It covers about 98 percent of India's population and more than about 1.4 billion people have been issued – 1.45 billion Aadhaar numbers have been issued. More than a billion have cell phone connections. Practically every household has been linked with a bank account.

Then what that enables is a complete payment system which can be built on the basis of Aadhaar and this, and a huge number of transactions, more than about a hundred and seventy-five million transactions – financial transactions – a month and very small financial transactions taking place through this mobile network using the Aadhaar interface and enabling payments.

And what it does is formalize those payments. What it does is helps people, small businesses, to keep accounts more effectively, track what they've received, what they've paid out. Simplified the whole mechanism, replaced the cash economy, and you can pay anybody, a

vegetable vendor on the street or anybody selling you anything, through just an app of, you know, the two mobile phones looking at each other and you just make the payment. It's been absolutely revolutionary the way that that has changed.

And there are other things. I mean, we built something called the DigiLocker which presently about 600 million people in the country use, and just to give you one example of how it helps, earlier if an Indian student wanted to go and study overseas there was a whole process of verification of the education documents where you needed to get seals and, you know, authentication from a range of government offices, apostolic authentication from the embassies, and so on.

Now what happens is DigiLocker becomes the repository where somebody can store. It's an e-wallet where people can store all of their educational documents and other authenticated documents, and you could just verify that with a click of a button saying has this been authentically issued by the entity where it's been claimed to have been issued.

Through an API linkage you can just verify that. So most verification of educational credentials is taking place, even overseas, through this mechanism which has simplified life for people tremendously.

Likewise, whether it's a driving license, any other kind of document, it's just made it much, much easier for people to operate through this, and it's growing. I mean, more and more documentation, more and more paperwork – all of it is going into this.

The way you hold your land and property documents, all of that is also increasingly getting into this framework. So that's how it's made life much easier, reduced friction and transaction costs, increased productivity, and helped a great deal.

Mr. Allen: Well, that's a really exciting series of stories of being successful in digital public infrastructure.

I remember the Aadhaar Universal Identity Service was something that we studied in my graduate school as a really interesting case study back when it was new, and now it's more than a decade old and just a remarkable fact of daily life in India, a real success story, reaching more than a billion people. So what do you envision for digital public infrastructure in AI? Are there obvious use cases to go after or are you still figuring that out?

Sec. Krishnan: Well I think there are – there would be some – there aren't very many

obvious use cases immediately but I think there's a wealth of data which is available there and I think the focus really is on building models – you know, models which don't necessarily – quantitative models and other types of models which analyze this data and figure out how we can go forward with what can be done.

And you know, in the space of, you know, enhancing credit, lending interfaces, and so on, you know, very often to appraise the creditworthiness of a poor person is very difficult because they don't have a trail of financial transactions. With UPI – the Universal Payments Interface – you can maintain a record of all the transactions. A small vendor, a vegetable vendor, what are the businesses they have done? What are the kind of payments they've received? What has been the trail of transactions that they have? Then, based on the volume of transactions it should be possible for a bank or for a financial institution to actually appraise the credit risk and see what the cash flows look like and enable them to lend. So those – and that – if you have an overlay of AI on that, then the analysis of that becomes much easier. The risks and the way that it can be disbursed, the way that loans will get disbursed, will become much easier.

And I think one of the key problems in India's economy still is that credit penetration is fairly low and credit is still high cost because of the administrative costs, particularly for smaller loans. And if we are able to crack that problem, I think you open a huge economic opportunity for people at the bottom of the pyramid. And that, I think, would be one use case which to my mind will be very obvious and should be worked on.

Mr. Allen: Great.

So now returning to the topic of the summit itself, according to the summit website you've received more than 700 proposals for main summit events. Have you already prioritized? What is going to be approved? Can you give us a sense of what some of the agenda for the summit is going to look like?

Sec. Krishnan: As I – as I mentioned to you, the aspects which are covered, this people, planet, progress it the main theme, and the working groups and all other groups are working around these themes. And so the events which are to be held will be oriented towards – which will finally be selected will be oriented towards this.

We have done it also a little differently. We are doing it over five days, starting from 16th of February, 16th, 17th, 18th, where there's a large expo covering more than – more than 50,000 square meters; a lot of showcasing of examples from across the world; country pavilions;

pavilions of large companies, both global companies and Indian companies; more than 400 startups taking part. So a range of things which will get covered in the expo and a range of events will be held simultaneously with this. We have, as you already pointed out, a number of requests of people wanting to come in and speak and do events at that time. So we should be able to empanel a wide platform for a number of these events to take place. So there's a huge choice for people who are attending and will be attending various sessions to see for themselves what is it specifically that they would like to participate in, and that will be a big opportunity in some ways.

The other element, of course, is that we are also having a number of pre-events. Even the Wadhwani Foundation is supporting us and doing some of these pre-events. They are being held as we speak across the world and across India. Even in the smallest, most remotest corners of the state and of the country, we are having AI pre-events which are being held all the time. We had one in the Bay Area last week. We had – we have had events in Europe, in Africa, and in Southeast Asia. In a – in a couple of days I'll be in Singapore, where I will again be speaking about what's happening in the AI space. So there will be a number of these pre-events as well which are building up the momentum very nicely towards the main summit.

And given the overall enthusiasm which is getting generated, I was just looking at what we were doing for the expo. We started with 50,000 square feet – square meters. Looks like we already have bookings exceeding that, so we are trying to see how we can increase the space and trying to sort of see that, you know, OK, some people you can exhibit on the first two days, and then somebody else on the next two days, and so on so that we can optimize this and more and more people can be given a chance to participate.

I mean, the enthusiasm and the entire feeling of wanting to participate in this event has been building up very nicely. The expectation is building up. So we expect it to be a wonderful and dynamic event as it comes together.

Mr. Allen: That's great. And there's going to be so many different kinds of outputs of this summit. Of course, there are the meetings that are going to take place. There's the keynote addresses that are going to be made. But if you think about deliverables that you're interested in, are there certain ones that you're hoping will emerge?

So, for example, in France there was a joint declaration issued at the end of the AI Action Summit between the governments that attended. France also announced a lot of investments and partnerships between its

companies and the government and other governments around the world. And so I'm curious what kind of deliverables that you're looking for to come out of this summit.

Sec. Krishnan: Obviously, a leaders declaration would be an important outcome of what we would be looking for, and to gain agreement on an outcome document which will – which will sort of underline some of the key themes of this particular – of this particular summit.

We also have, you know, a research symposium and very, very high-level expert groups who are working on specific documents which will come out on the seven key theme areas where the working groups are working. And we expect that those would also be very high-quality documents which could give guidance for the way that AI and the policymaking and various other elements around AI will sort of emerge in the days to come.

These will be two or three important outcomes that would – that would come out. Clearly, large companies would also be there. We are expecting a number of CEOs to be there, and I'm sure they will also be showcasing some of the investments and some of the new initiatives which I think will be important and significant. So these will be some of the key deliverables that we expect.

But more than anything else, I think we also look at it as an opportunity for many of the startups to showcase some of what they have built to a wider audience. And if they are able to push this business forward, and especially in the application space if we are able to sort of create bridges which will bring together possible users of these applications and those who are making them, that, I think, would also be a huge outcome of the summit itself.

Mr. Allen: Mmm hmm.

So one thing that I often hear is that India is a real leader of the Global South when it comes to AI. You obviously have these success stories in digital public infrastructure. You have a vibrant venture capital and startup ecosystem. These are all things that other Global South countries very much want. And so I'm curious what, if anything, you're thinking about in terms of the South-to-South dialogue that's going to take place at the summit or its objectives there.

Sec. Krishnan: Yes. I think – I think there will be a fair amount of South-to-South dialogue which will take place. We already have MOUs with many countries of the Global South on DPIs, and we will be looking to see how AI can be an overlay on that.

You know, it's an opportunity for countries of the Global South to learn from each other. There are certain areas in which India has moved forward. There are certain other areas where other countries in the Global South have good and interesting experiences which we can share and which we can learn from. So we will use this – the summit as an opportunity to sort of establish that bridge and establish that partnership with all of these countries and see how we can work together to take this forward.

Mr. Allen: Great.

And are there any other countries or stakeholders who have been your partners in shaping the summit agenda that are worth making special note of?

Sec. Krishnan: Oh yes. We've been having very active working groups with partnerships from various countries. Many countries – about 14 countries – are co-chairing these working groups, along with India. And in addition, there's been extensive participation from countries in the working group meetings. Leading up to the summit, we will be having these hybrid meetings of these working groups over the next – in the coming weeks, and they will also have an opportunity to choose to visit India and do the meeting here physically.

So there would – you know, in each of these interactions, I think there's a lot of learning which takes place and a lot of forward movement which happens. And many of the countries, I mean, we have had excellent – France had hosted the previous summit. They have been unstinted in the kind of support they've given us. EU has also been very receptive. We have been talking to our counterparts in the United States at multiple levels, both in the government and in the – in terms of think tanks and bodies, and also many companies. We have been interlocuting with counterparts in many countries of the Global South. Many countries have signed on already to be partner countries. They are putting up their pavilions and showing us what they have done. The U.K. has been a very keen partner in some of the areas of DI-related work, likewise Japan. So I think there's been huge support and a number of countries which have come forward very willingly to see how they can take this forward.

Mr. Allen: So during the French AI Action Summit many heads of state actually attended, as well as CEOs of global countries – sorry, global companies. Is there anything that you can share at this stage about the attendee list of the India AI Impact Summit? While I was in India I heard some heads of state have already agreed to participate, but is there anything you can

share publicly at this time.

Sec. Krishnan: That's right. That is right. We have a number of heads of state who have already indicated their willingness to participate and their keenness to participate. We would wait for their formal announcements. We have received communications from them.

Likewise, close to about 50 CXOs have already confirmed their participation. There is a fair amount of excitement there.

International organizations, also many of them have been very keen to participate and they have indicated their participation. So I think all in all it's going to be a very, very high-profile gathering in Delhi.

Mr. Allen: Well, certainly the CSIS Wadhwani AI Center is very excited to participate, as is I know the Wadhwani Foundation. It's looking to be a great event.

My final question for you is, you know, many global summits risk – become purely aspirational or merely a dialogue as opposed to driving real impact. So what steps are you taking to ensure that there is real impact at the end of this story, other, of course, than having it in the name? What kind of actionable progress do you want to see?

Sec. Krishnan: You see, I think the most important thing is AI is going to be a multi-stakeholder effort. Governments have a role, of course, in facilitating and regulating and providing funds where needed. They need to do their bit. The companies need to do their bit. Civil society organizations, academic organizations, all of them need to do their bit. So there are many things which are lined up for each of them. I think what we expect the Impact Summit to do is to set a clear agenda on how we move forward on each of these aspects and how each of these aspects in a sense gets, you know, funded and gets – moves forward in a – in a way that can actually deliver impact. I think that's one very key thing.

The second key thing, as I already pointed out, is the emphasis on applications, on where they can make a difference to people. And that, I think, if we are able to showcase enough of them, it would really catch on and move forward.

The third would be on democratizing AI resources. And I think India, through the IndiaAI Mission, has an interesting approach on how we can address the issue of providing AI infrastructure, including the compute facility; how we can address the issue of building AI models relatively inexpensively to suit local conditions; and how you put together data which can then be used for, you know, what you do locally. And with

that, if we are able to build good applications which can be deployed, it can make a significant difference across the world. I think showcasing those and building bridges and enabling that to happen will be a key outcome as well.

So I'm pretty – I'm pretty confident that this will not just be an event about a lot of talk or a lot of, you know, aspirational goals, but actual concrete outcomes in what people will see and what they will take away.

Mr. Allen: Fabulous. And I certainly share your optimism about the overall event. I'm very excited to participate and attend myself and can say that having just been to India it really is an exciting time for the country's AI ecosystem; many great announcements coming out just about every week.

Sec. Krishnan: Thank you. And let me just invite both you and all your audience to be in Delhi in the week of February 16th to attend the India AI Impact Summit and the various events which will be surrounding that. We've taken care to make sure that the venue itself is a large venue with many events going on, not much movement that you would have to do outside of that venue. So I think you will see a lot of energy and a lot of buzz, so please do try to make it here in February. Thank you.

Mr. Allen: Great. Well, thank you, Secretary. And thank you for taking the time late your evening, early our morning for this terrific event.

And so, with that, we'll bring the event to a close. Please go to CSIS.org, where you can find all the work that we're doing related to AI policy and the India AI Impact Summit. Thank you.

(END.)