

**REMARKS OF FCC CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI  
AT U.S.-INDIA BUSINESS COUNCIL INDIA IDEAS SUMMIT**

**“STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE DEPLOYMENT”**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**

**JUNE 12, 2019**

Good afternoon. It’s great to be with you today, and it’s an honor to be a part of this impressive lineup. You’re barely three hours into this summit, and you’ve already heard from Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, the Governors of Kentucky and New Jersey, Google CEO Sundar Pichai, and NASDAQ CEO Adena Friedman. Who do you have lined up for Day Two? Perhaps the Indian Avengers? Priyanka Chopra, Salman Khan, and Virat Kohli?

The bar has been set high, but with my fellow panelist, Sudhanshu Vats, and moderator Jim Taiclet, I think we’re up to the challenge. I actually have a story to share about Jim’s company, American Tower.

Last October, I had the opportunity to attend the India Mobile Congress in New Delhi. During this trip, I visited a dusty neighborhood outside New Delhi, where I checked out an American Tower cell site. This cell site provides wireless coverage to thousands of people for whom a mobile phone is their only digital access to the outside world. And the fiber that feeds the site is used for Internet kiosks for teaching math and reading to kids in impoverished areas. As a person of South Asian descent, I can’t describe what it meant to see Indian kids eager for the opportunity to learn and improve their lives.

To me, this site visit perfectly captures the value of the U.S.-India Business Council and the collaboration it promotes. American Tower benefits from the opportunity to expand its business to a new market. And the people of India benefit from expanded access to modern communications. Everyone is better off.

The chance to promote mutual growth and prosperity is why I’m excited to work with groups like the USIBC and my peers in India’s government. On my first international trip as Chairman of the FCC, I met with my Indian counterpart, the Chairman of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, R.S. Sharma. We charted a plan for enhanced collaboration and signed a Letter of Intent for cooperation between the two agencies. Since then, our two agencies have increased our cooperation, regularly exchanging information and sharing ideas on topics of mutual interest, like advancing broadband deployment and attacking robocalls. I’m grateful for the opportunity to meet with you today and continue to build on this foundation.

You’ve already had a couple of presentations about promoting technology and innovation—in particular, Sundar Pichai’s discussion on “Ushering in a Connected Future.” So by now, you should have a pretty high-level picture of the opportunities that digital technologies can open up and why it matters. For this session, we’re going to get deeper in the weeds to talk about how to deploy the physical infrastructure that makes this innovation possible.

In thinking about what areas to highlight, I thought that I would use the Indian government’s National Digital Communications Policy as my guide. Released in September 2018, the strategy is organized around three central pillars: Connect India; Propel India; Secure

India. I think this is a useful way to think about our own work at the FCC. I'll talk about strategies we are pursuing to make sure everyone can access modern communications—connect; to unleash next-generation technologies—propel; and to guard against threats to our networks—secure.

Let's start with *connect*. In the U.S., we believe that a competitive free market is the most powerful force we have for driving network investment.

That's why the FCC has removed many regulatory barriers to lower costs and speed up the process of building broadband infrastructure. To make it easier to install wireless infrastructure like small cells, we set a reasonable deadline for cities to rule on siting applications and reasonable limits on siting fees. We also eliminated federal red tape to make sure that infrastructure the size of a pizza box won't face the same regulatory review as a 200-foot tower. We also convened a panel of outside experts from industry, state and local government, and the non-profit community. We call it our Broadband Deployment Advisory Council. Among other things, it laid the foundation for the FCC to enact a groundbreaking reform known as "one-touch-make-ready," which made it much easier for competitive broadband providers to attach fiber to utility poles.

We've also modernized rules to make it easier for carriers to transition from maintaining yesterday's copper networks to building tomorrow's fiber networks. And we scrapped utility-style broadband regulation inspired by rules from the 1930s.

There is plenty of evidence that our policies are working. In 2018, fiber was deployed to more new homes in the United States than any year ever. Small-cell deployment more than quadrupled. Average broadband speeds are up 40% year over year. And just this week, we learned that investment in broadband networks was up about \$3 billion in 2018, the second consecutive annual increase. This is particularly notable since network investment fell in 2015 and 2016, the last two years of the prior Administration.

Of course, despite the good news, millions of Americans still live in rural areas where there is currently no business case for the private sector alone to build broadband networks. As is the case in parts of Assam, Uttarakhand, and Karnataka, we have communities in Alaska, Utah, and Kansas that don't have access. To connect these communities, the FCC's Universal Service Fund provides federal subsidies to private carriers to leverage additional investment. We've begun allocating some of this support by using a reverse auction, which harnesses market forces and a diverse array of technologies to maximize the impact and efficiency of this investment. Indeed, just this week, we authorized \$167 million in universal service subsidies to connect 60,000 unserved rural homes and businesses in some of the hardest-to-connect corners of the country.

Obviously, India's connectivity challenges are significantly different in nature and scale. I commend Prime Minister Modi and the Indian government for their ambitious goals of universal Internet access by 2022 and fixed broadband access to 50% of households by 2022. To meet these targets, they're pursuing bold strategies such as installing two million public Wi-Fi hotspots in rural areas and redesigning and expanding the Universal Service Obligation Fund.

Turning from "connect," there is our work to *propel* next-generation technologies, specifically 5G. Many of the actions I already mentioned to speed wireless infrastructure deployment are part of what we call our 5G FAST plan. Another part of our plan is making

additional spectrum available for 5G. Already this year, we've held spectrum auctions in the 28 GHz and 24 GHz bands. On December 10, we'll be launching a single auction of 3,400 MHz of spectrum in the 37, 39, and 47 GHz bands. We've also been working to repurpose mid-band spectrum for 5G. Among other steps, we will be holding an auction in the 3.5 GHz band next year. We think 5G could be transformative, enabling things like telemedicine and precision agriculture, automotive safety and gaming, industrial IoT and other breakthroughs we can't even conceive today. We want to set the stage for this innovation and see what develops.

Finally, I'll briefly highlight some of the things we're doing to make sure our communications networks are *secure*. One of our top priorities is to protect the security and integrity of the communications supply chain. That's why the FCC has proposed to prohibit the use of the broadband funding we administer to purchase equipment or services from any company that poses a national security threat to the integrity of United States communications networks or the communications supply chain. That's why the FCC denied the application of China Mobile USA, a wireless carrier ultimately owned by the Chinese government, to provide international telecommunications services in the United States. And that's why last month, I was honored to be part of the United States delegation that traveled to Prague for an important conference on how best to secure our 5G networks. This meeting featured government officials from more than 30 countries, as well as industry leaders. And at this gathering, we were able to develop a set of consensus best practices for 5G security.

When making decisions that impact 5G security, in particular, we need to remember that the implications are wide-ranging. 5G will affect our militaries, our industries, our critical infrastructure, and much more. The procurement and deployment decisions made now will have a generational impact on our security, economy, and society.

When it comes to 5G, we cannot afford to make risky choices and just hope for the best. We must see clearly the threats to the security of our networks and act to address them. And the more that allies like the United States and India can work together and make security decisions based on shared principles, the safer that our 5G networks will be.

These are just some of the strategies we are pursuing at the FCC to enable our citizens to benefit from the digital revolution. I look forward to exploring other strategies with you today, and working with you and others in the days ahead to connect, to propel, and to secure the digital future of the United States and India—two strong allies and two good friends.