

"Republican Delegation Visits Gandhinagar to Embrace Modi as India's Reagan" (March 25)

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At a lunchtime news conference held on March 25, 2013 at the Viceroy of India restaurant on Devon Avenue, office-bearers of the **National Indian American Public Policy Institute (NIAPPI) revealed details of a high-level delegation from the Republican caucus leaving the next day for Gandhinagar to endorse Narendra Modi as the Ronald Reagan of India.** This will be the start of a **ten-day whirlwind tour, sponsored and funded by NIAPPI and covering ten cities,** across the states of Karnataka, Punjab, and Rajasthan. **A simultaneous news conference was being held in Delhi involving all the major news networks in India, the accompanying press release stated.**

Spokesman Shalabh (Shalli) Kumar said: "NIAPPI is sponsoring a very high level congressional and business delegation to visit with the Hon. Narendra Modi, Chief Minister of the state of Gujarat, India, widely expected to be the next Prime Minister of India. The visit would take place at 10:00 AM on March 28th, 2013 in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, India and would last the whole day ending in a dinner meeting with Modi. **Modi is being hailed as the Ronald Reagan of India with his economic miracle in Gujarat and a message of prosperity for all that transcends religion, caste, and social status.** NIAPPI strongly endorses this message in India as well as the US. This would be the first time senior members of US Government would be paying a visit to Modi. The last highest ranking US official to call on Modi was Peter Haus, Consul General from Mumbai."

Kumar explained how this trip is the culmination of a chain of events that started off with Aaron Schock (R) from the 18th Congressional District of Illinois moving the House of Representatives on Jan 14 to recognize the election of Narendra Modi as third term Chief Minister. Modi reciprocated by inviting Schock, who is now leading the delegation to visit Gandhinagar. Elected leader of the Republican Conference, which accounts for 203 representatives, Cathy McMorris Rodgers is the highest ranking Republican joining this delegation to convey her feelings in person to Modi. The other two members of Congress on the team are Cynthia Lummis (Wyoming), and Marlin Stutzman (Indiana 3rd District). Newt Gingrich, the brains behind the "Republican revolution," who has been likewise inducted into endorsing Modi's program of "economic prosperity for all," will be holding a live phone conference from the USA with the Chief Minister on March 28, when the latter will be receiving this delegation in Gandhinagar.

The Republican delegation, which includes staffers, spouses and businessmen, numbers about 20 people. They are being accompanied by an Indian American contingent comprising Bhailal Patel, Shalabh (Shalli) Kumar, Prasad Yalamanchi, Alka Tyler, and NIAPPI founding member Brij Raj Sharma, the first three of whom were present at the news conference. This is the **culmination of an intense effort on the part of conservative elements among the Indian diaspora movement to endorse Narendra Modi as Ronald Reagan of India.** The cost of the trip, which runs into the high six figures, is being borne by the NIAPPI umbrella organization.

After Gandhinagar, the delegation will visit Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Mysore, Thirupati, Udaipur, Jaipur, Agra, Chandigarh, Amritsar, and Delhi. At Udaipur, they are to lay a wreath at the Maharana Prathap Singh memorial. In Delhi they are scheduled to meet with US ambassador to India Nancy Powell and BJP

leader LK Advani. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) President Rajnath Singh will welcome them with an address. **Press releases are to be issued every night.**

One of the key challenges on the NIAPPI agenda for this trip is to unblock the India-US nuclear deal. Kumar explained that not a penny has been spent despite the signing of the agreement because of the liability issue, which is the hangover from the Bhopal catastrophe. Major US plant constructors such as Westinghouse and GE are unwilling to invest until this hurdle is cleared. **The Indian delegates hope to persuade the BJP leadership, which is opposed despite being the party of business, to be less stringent with the liability clauses.** At the same time, NIAPPI is continuing a very private dialogue with powers to be in Congress and Chief Minister of Gujarat in terms of trade. Modi has an excellent working relationship with ex-PM of Japan, and hence the highest investment is from there, leaving the US behind. Were the nuclear deal being implemented as envisaged, it would have created a million jobs in the US, Kumar observed.

Various questions were raised by the media present. **Why are Bobby Jindal and Nikki Haley not going along on this trip?** How is the trip being funded? **Why the insistence on Reagan, when Modi has publicly compared himself to Obama** during his recent speech telecast to the Indian diaspora and viewed by Overseas Friends of the BJP in Chicago and this is the usual comparison made? Kumar responded that both Reagan and Modi believe in minimal government. Is the delegation traveling across India through official carriers or private jet? **Is not BJP opposition to the nuclear deal also and as much because its terms compromise the sovereign independence of the Indian Republic?** How is NIAPPI related to the National Indian American Coalition (NIAC) that was actively campaigning for specific Republican candidates during the recent US election? Kumar responded that NIAC was an informal organization that has since been dissolved.

Photo captions (in order of priority):

- 1) (L to R) Prasad Yalamanchi, Shalabh Kumar, and Bhailal Patel holding news conference at Viceroy of India restaurant (Devon Avenue) on March 25, 2013.
- 2) Congressman (R) Aaron Schock, who is leading the NIAPPI delegation to Gandhinagar

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