



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ATUL LOKE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

The opening of a Hindu temple in Ayodhya, in northern India, on Monday. Narendra Modi, the prime minister, led the inauguration.

## A New Temple Embodies Modi’s Merger of Religion and Politics

**By MUJIB MASHAL and HARI KUMAR**  
AYODHYA, India — They fanned out across the vast country, knocking on doors in the name of a cause that would redefine India. These foot soldiers and organizers, including a young Narendra Modi, collected millions of dollars to be socked away for a long fight to build a grand Hindu temple in Ayodhya, in northern India. Across 200,000 villages, ceremonies were arranged to bless individual bricks that would be sent to that sacred city, believed by Hindus to be the birthplace of the deity Ram.

The bricks, the campaign’s leaders declared, would not just be used for the temple’s construction on land occupied for centuries by a mosque. They would be the foundation for a Hindu rashtra, or Hindu nation, that would correct what right-wing Hindus saw as the injustice of India’s birth as a secular republic. Nearly four decades later, the cornerstone of that sweeping vision has been laid. Mr. Modi, now the country’s prime minister, inaugurated the Ram temple in Ayodhya on Monday — the crowning achievement

of a national movement aimed at establishing Hindu supremacy in India by rallying the country’s Hindu majority across castes and tribes. “Today, our Ram has come. After centuries of patience and sacrifice, our Lord Ram has come,” Mr. Modi said during the ceremony. “It is the beginning of a new era.” The moment is both one of triumph for Hindu nationalists and one of jubilation for many others who care little for politics. Ram

### For Hindu Nationalists, a Moment of Glory

has a wide following in India; excitement around the temple’s consecration had been building for weeks, with saffron-colored pennants strung across a million streets and markets, and posters of Ram advertising the event everywhere. But for the country’s 200 million

Muslims, the Ram temple has reinforced a sense of despair and dislocation. The Babri Mosque, which the Hindu side argued was built after Muslim rulers destroyed an earlier Hindu temple in the spot, was brought down in 1992 by Hindu activists, unleashing waves of sectarian violence that left thousands dead. The manner in which the mosque was razed set a precedent of impunity that reverberates today: lynchings of Muslim men ac-

Continued on Page A6



Prayers outside the temple, which was built on the site of a mosque destroyed by a Hindu mob.

## Biden Officials Poised to Delay Big Gas Project

**By CORAL DAVENPORT**  
WASHINGTON — The Biden administration is pausing a decision on whether to approve what would be the largest natural gas export terminal in the United States, a delay that could stretch past the November election and spell trouble for that project and 16 other proposed terminals, according to three people with knowledge of the matter. The White House is directing the Energy Department to expand its evaluation of the project to consider its impact on climate change, as well as the economy and national security, said these people, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicly discuss internal deliberations. The Energy Department has never rejected a proposed natural gas project because of its expected environmental impact. The move comes as President Biden gears up for what is likely to

Continued on Page A13

## In the U.K., a Weighty Ruling On What Makes a Chip a Chip

**By ALI WATKINS**  
LONDON — No profit grows, Shakespeare once wrote, where no pleasure is taken. And so in the tedious march of life, we find joy in small things: The rising of the sun. A fine glass of wine. The greasy snap of a well-dressed potato crisp. But soft! Not so fast. Life affords no simple pleasures, and even that delectable crunch comes with a weighty debate: How much potato doth a true crisp — chip, to the Americans — contain? This — and several other probing questions of the crisp aficionado — was immortalized by a British tax appeals court last week, which ruled that Walkers Sensations Poppadoms, the fluffy, non-crisp-appearing potato medallions, are, in fact, the same as potato crisps. Thus, we add to the hallowed roster of existential food debates, the moral implications of which far surpass their subjects’ consumable utility. Among them: Is a Jaffa Cake a cake, or a biscuit? Does a Chicago-style pie count as

pizza? Is a hot dog a sandwich? Do you prefer Wawa over Sheetz, or are you wrong? The ruling means Walkers, the company that makes poppadoms and dozens of other snack foods, will have to pay the same value-added tax on its poppadoms as it does on its various crisps. More important, a trial judge has recorded for all man- and crisp-lov-

Continued on Page A10



JEREMIE SOUTEYRAT FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES  
Walkers poppadoms, or chips?

## Russia Blames Kyiv for Crash of Military Plane

**By ANDREW E. KRAMER and IVAN NECHEPURENKO**  
KYIV, Ukraine — A large Russian military transport plane crashed on Wednesday near the border with Ukraine killing everyone onboard, the Russian Defense Ministry said, accusing Ukraine of shooting down the plane with missiles. The ministry said in a statement that the plane had been carrying 65 Ukrainian prisoners of war who were being transferred to the Belgorod region to be exchanged for Russian service personnel. It accused Ukrainian forces of launching two missiles from the nearby Kharkiv region of Ukraine that struck the aircraft. The plane was also carrying six crew members and three other individuals, the ministry said. The Russian claims could not be independently verified. Officials in Kyiv did not comment directly on Moscow’s accusations that Ukraine shot down the plane, or its claims that Ukrainian prisoners of war died in the crash. The military’s general staff headquarters issued a statement Wednesday afternoon asserting a right to target Russian

### Claims Transport Held Ukrainian P.O.W.s

military transport airplanes in the border region. But later Wednesday, Ukraine’s military intelligence agency hinted that the episode might have been a tragic mistake, saying that Russia had not informed it that prisoners would be flown to Belgorod’s airport, as was the case in previous exchanges. The airport is within range of Ukrainian



UGC, VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS

Video posted to Telegram showed a crash in the Belgorod region.

#### INTERNATIONAL A4-11

**Hungary Stalls on Sweden**  
Viktor Orban appears to be exploiting Sweden’s bid to join NATO for his own gains. News Analysis. PAGE A9

**6-Day Rail Strike in Germany**  
The walkout, over pay and hours, caused the cancellation of most inter-city and commuter trains. PAGE A5



#### NATIONAL A12-17, 20

**Safe Haven Under Threat**  
More than a million people have entered the U.S. temporarily under a program that the G.O.P. wants to limit. PAGE A12

**New York Called ‘Far Stronger’**  
In his State of the City speech, Mayor Eric Adams focused on how “crime is down” and “jobs are up.” PAGE A17

#### OBITUARIES B10-11

**Confirmed Big Bang Theory**  
Dr. Arno A. Penzias, whose 1964 discovery with Dr. Robert W. Wilson settled a debate over the origin and evolution of the universe, was 90. PAGE B11

#### BUSINESS B1-5

**Fading Power of S.I.’s Cover**  
Once a definer of sports discourse, Sports Illustrated and its cover have lost influence, and much more. PAGE B1

**Quality Control at Boeing**  
New details are emerging about the preparation of the 737 Max 9 plane that blew out a door plug midflight. PAGE B1

#### SPORTS B6-9, 12

**A Star Stays in Hollywood**  
JuJu Watkins turned down top basketball programs to play for Southern California and try to lift a school in her hometown. PAGE B6

#### THURSDAY STYLES D1-6

**Fashion Way Forward**  
Iris Van Herpen displays otherworldly designs in a show at a Paris museum, Vanessa Friedman writes. PAGE D4

**A View From the Front Row**  
Projecting himself into the latest styles in Paris, our critic poses the question: “Could I pull that off?” PAGE D1



#### ARTS C1-6

**A Politically Charged Show**  
The Whitney Biennial will feature a “dissident chorus” of artists presenting their views of turbulent times. PAGE C1

**An Actress’s Breakout Year**  
Ji-young Yoo, starring with Nicole Kidman in “Expats” on Amazon, still can’t believe she landed the role. PAGE C1

#### OPINION A18-19

**Nicholas Kristof** PAGE A18

