



ATUL LOKE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Narendra Modi’s legions of supporters make him a heavy favorite to win a third term as prime minister in the vote that began Friday.

As Modi’s Power Grows, India Cedes Him More

By MUJIB MASHAL
GHAZIABAD, India — As he campaigns across India for an election that began on Friday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks of his insatiable ambitions in terms of dinner-table appetite. Roofs over heads, water connections, cooking gas cylinders — Mr. Modi reads down the menu of what he calls the abundant “development” he has provided to India’s poor. But he’s not stopping there. “What Modi has done so far is just the appetizer,” he said at one stop, referring to himself in the third person, as he often does.

Strong, Beloved Hand Whom Critics See as Risk to Democracy

“The main course is yet to come.” To Mr. Modi’s legions of supporters, a third term would bring more of what they find so appealing in him. He is that rare breed of strongman who keeps an ear to the ground. He is a magnetic figure and a powerful orator. He has built an image as a tireless, incorruptible worker for a country on

the rise. But to his critics, Mr. Modi’s talk of a “main course” is an alarm bell for the future of the world’s largest democracy. Mr. Modi, 73, enters the election a heavy favorite, his party’s grip over India’s more populous northern and central heartlands firmer than ever, the opposition in the same decisive geography even more diminished. Yet even with his place as India’s unrivaled leader seemingly secured, he has carried out a crackdown on dissent that has only intensified. In the lead-up to the voting, *Continued on Page A6*

NEWS ANALYSIS

Israel and Iran Suppress Urge For Escalation

By PATRICK KINGSLEY
JERUSALEM — The relatively limited scope of Israel’s overnight strikes on Iran, and a subdued response from Iranian officials, may have lowered the chances of an immediate escalation in fighting between the two countries, analysts said on Friday. While Israel is still fighting wars on two fronts, against Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon, the likelihood of a third front has ebbed, at least for now. For days, there have been fears that a forceful Israeli response to Iran’s attack on southern Israel last weekend could prompt an even more aggressive riposte from Iran, potentially turning a tit-for-tat confrontation into a wider war.

Foreign leaders advised Israel to treat its successful defense against Iran’s missile barrage as a victory that required no retaliation, warning against a counter-attack that might further destabilize a region already roiled by Israel’s wars with two Iranian allies, Hamas and Hezbollah, and tensions with a third, the Houthis in Yemen. But when it finally came early on Friday, Israel’s strike appeared less damaging than expected, allowing Iranian officials and state-run news outlets to downplay its significance, at least for now. In public, only one high-rank- *Continued on Page A8*



BRIAN OTIENO FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Making Movies in Somalia
Once forbidden to watch films, Abshir Rageh creates “storytelling that can change lives.” Page A4.

Biden Blocks Drilling in Vast Swath of Alaska

By LISA FRIEDMAN
The Biden administration expanded federal protections across millions of acres of Alaskan wilderness on Friday, blocking oil, gas and mining operations in some of the most unspoiled land in the country. The Interior Department said it would deny a permit for an industrial road that the state of Alaska had wanted to build through the Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve in order to reach a large copper deposit with an estimated value of \$7.5 billion. It also announced it would ban drilling in

A Conservation Legacy, or an Economic Jam?

more than half of the 23-million-acre National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, an ecologically sensitive expanse north of the Arctic Circle. Together, the two moves amount to one of the biggest efforts in history to shield Alaskan land from drilling and mining. They are expected to face challenges from industry as well as from elected leaders in Alaska, where oil and gas revenues make up much of the

state’s budget and where mining is a main driver of the economy. “Alaska’s majestic and rugged lands and waters are among the most remarkable and healthy landscapes in the world, sustaining a vibrant subsistence economy for Alaska Native communities,” President Biden said in a statement. Part of an environmental blitz ahead of Earth Day, the Alaska announcements are designed to help Mr. Biden cement his climate and conservation legacy and win back voters still angry over a decision he made last year to approve Wil- *Continued on Page A16*

Old Social Media Posts Haunting Trump Trial

By JONAH E. BROMWICH and MAGGIE HABERMAN
“Are these your posts?” the judge asked. The slight, silver-haired woman stood at a lectern in the icy-cold courtroom on the 15th floor of the Manhattan Criminal Courts Building. She blinked under the lights as she was questioned, standing about 12 feet from the man who had inspired the social media messages nearly a decade before. They were hers, she confirmed, and the judge directed her to read them aloud. It took her a moment to get to the crux of the first, which

Potential Jurors Jarred by Their Own Words

dated back to 2016. “Let’s be civil,” she read. “And try to protect the rights of the many at risk should we fail to stop the election of a racist, sexist, narcissist . . .” She interrupted herself. “Oops. That sounds bad.” It was just one of several such inquiries this week as lawyers and the judge asked prospective jurors, who live in deeply Democratic Manhattan, to explain so-

cial media posts that were critical of him as president or as a candidate. The posts were apparently unearthed by researchers working for the legal team representing Donald J. Trump. Prosecutors asked their own questions, but for the most part did not delve into the prospective jurors’ posting histories. It was the defense team that expressed the most concern about what had happened online, an appropriate focus for lawyers representing the most online of presidents. Mr. Trump thrived on social media. Using Twitter, a platform that *Continued on Page A13*



Success Through Friendship
The Knicks’ Jalen Brunson, Josh Hart and Donte DiVincenzo have been buddies since college. *PAGE B6*

Judge Denies Top Trainer
Horses guided by Bob Baffert will not be allowed to compete in this year’s Kentucky Derby. *PAGE B10*

Asian-Jewish Rift Over Gaza
Young activists are pressuring a Japanese American group to re-evaluate a long-held partnership and to call for a cease-fire. *PAGE A11*

Clamping Down on Polluters
The E.P.A. will shift the cost of cleaning up two “forever chemicals” away from taxpayers. *PAGE A16*

Turkey Quake Trial Opens
Over 300 people died when a residential complex toppled. Survivors hope to punish the men who built it. *PAGE A10*



Abundant but Tortured Poems
Two lyrically bountiful albums released by Taylor Swift almost singularly focus on romantic love — her own — and spiteful tales of heartbreak. *PAGE C1*

Lydia Polgreen *PAGE A19*

Hanging on to Mortgage Rates
On a scale not seen in decades, many Americans are stuck in homes they would rather leave, due to the current high rates. *PAGE B1*

Fiercely Debated Philosopher
Daniel C. Dennett insisted that religion was an illusion and that free will was a fantasy. He was 82. *PAGE B11*

Allman Brothers Guitarist
Dickey Betts, known for his fiery style, wrote and sang the band’s biggest hit, “Ramblin’ Man.” He was 80. *PAGE B12*

THIS WEEKEND

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