

# THE DIASPORA BI-WEEKLY



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## Glory reclaimed: NY Senate's anti-Swastika Bill dropped

Todd Kaminsky said he is officially withdrawing an anti-Swastika Bill that he had introduced in New York Senate in August 2019, proposing to include it in school curriculum as a hate symbol

It was a moment of victory for all those who have fought to uphold the dignity of the 'Swastika', the religious icon highly revered by communities including Hindus, when the anti-Swastika Senate Bill in New York was dropped on March 26.

While withdrawing the Bill, New York State Senator Todd Kaminsky who had introduced it in August 2019, portraying the Swastika as a symbol of hatred, said his intention was to promote tolerance and not cause friction with the Hindus.

The Swastika has been respected in India for millennia as an icon of well-being and piety.

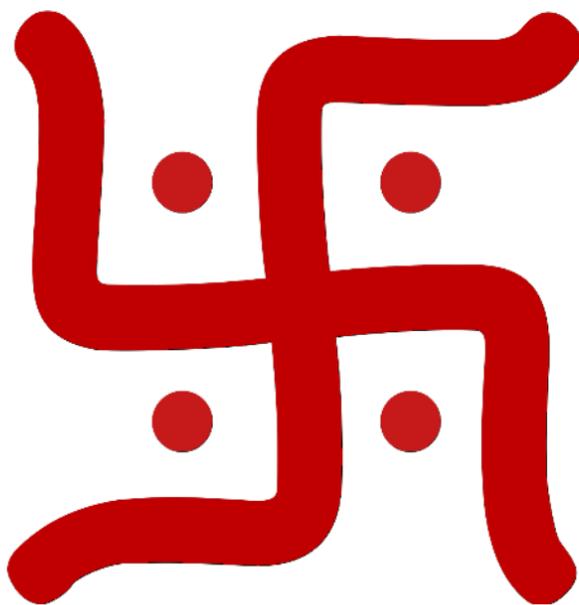
Somewhere down the line, it was

appropriated to form the Hakenkreuz, the hooked cross that represented the Nazis and soon became a symbol of hatred, in the process distorting its origin beyond recognition for a world that did not know much about its deep-rooted religious and cultural significance.

So when Kaminsky's Bill proposed to include Swastika as a hate symbol in school curriculum, it agitated Hindus and other communities. If made into a law, it would have required all schools in New York to introduce Swastika to students as a symbol of hatred and intolerance. It was cleared by the Senate on July 21 and awaited the review of the Assembly Education Committee. Realising that not many understood the difference between the Swastika and the German Hakenkreuz, Hindu groups launched efforts to create awareness about the symbol.

The dropping of the Bill has come as a major relief for Hindus, Buddhists, Jains and others for

whom Swastika is an inseparable part of their religion. After spending months fretting over the possibility of their children either being forced to be apologetic about Swastika or groomed into looking at it with disdain, these communities are now finally heaving a sigh of relief.



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# After T20I, Team India win ODI series

Nail-biting finish to fifth match at Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on March 20 where the hosts gave England a mammoth target of 225; later in Pune, the Men in Blue sealed a 2-1 victory in 3-match ODI series

#Ahmedabad

**S**kipper Virat Kohli and his team have continued their winning streak. After clinching the five-match T-20I series against England at Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on March 20, they went on to bag the three-match ODI series, also against England. The matches were played in Pune, the last one on Sunday.

In response to a target of 330 runs, England could only reach 322 for nine in 50 overs, with Sam Curran smashing an unbeaten knock of 95 runs in 83 balls. Despite Curran's valiant display, the visitors crashed to a defeat, crumbling against India's bowling department. Shardul Thakur was in top form for India, returning with four wickets and Bhuvneshwar Kumar scalped three dismissals. Also, T Natarajan took a wicket and held his nerves in the final over to take India to a thrilling series win. Earlier, the hosts were bowled out for 329 runs in 48.2 overs.

Earlier in Ahmedabad, after the blistering half-centuries scored by Kohli and Rohit Sharma, bowlers ensured England wrapped up their game at 188/8. Sharma's sensational 64 off 34 balls and Virat Kohli's unbeaten 80 off 52 balls powered India to a massive 224 for two, their best ever total against England, after the visitors won the toss for the fourth time in the series and opted to field. Hardik Pandya scored 39 off just 17 balls.



In Ahmedabad

For England, it was a bad start when Bhuvneshwar Kumar sent their opener Jason Roy back to the pavilion in the first over itself, with no run. Jos Buttler (52 off 34) and Dawid Malan (68 off 46) kept India on the edge with a threatening 130-run stand but England's challenge fizzled with the fall of the wicketkeeper-batsman in the 13th over bowled by Bhuvneshwar Kumar.

When the going seemed to get tough, Bhuvneshwar scalped Butler in the 13th over. Jonny Bairstow came in as number four, but could not last long.

England's innings eventually ended at 188 for eight as they lost match by 36 runs. Bhuvneshwar got 2-16 in his four overs. Shardul picked up three wickets, while Hardik Pandya and T Natarajan got one each.

## Master Blaster tests positive for Covid-19

# Mumbai

Cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar said on Saturday (March 27) that he had tested positive for Covid-19 and had quarantined himself at home. He said the symptoms were mild and that he was following all Covid protocol as advised by his doctor. All other members of his family have tested negative.



## Giant vessel blocking Suez Canal finally freed

**E**ver Green, the giant ship that had been blocking Egypt's Suez Canal for almost a week now, has finally been refloated, allowing hundreds of stranded ships to resume movement. The canal links the Mediterranean to the Red Sea and is one of the busiest trade routes in the world. According to a report, the ship was holding up an estimated \$9.6 billion of goods each day. At that time, it was believed that freeing the ship, one of the biggest container vessels in the world, would take several weeks.

BBC.com quoted Peter Berdowski, CEO of Dutch salvage company Boskalis, as saying that the ship had been refloated at 15:05 (13:05 GMT) on Monday, "thereby making free passage through the Suez Canal possible again".



The ship ran aground last Tuesday when it was caught in a sandstorm. Small but powerful tug boats were pushed into action to dislodge the ship, while dredgers were employed to dig out mud and sand from beneath the ends of the ship.

The traffic may be cleared in the next few days.

## Now, file tax returns by May 17

#Washington

**T**he Treasury Department and Internal Revenue Service of the US government recently announced that the federal income tax filing due date for individuals for the 2020 tax year will be automatically extended to May 17, 2021, from the earlier deadline of April 15.

This concession has been made to help individual taxpayers amid the pandemic. This also automatically will permit taxpayers who owe taxes to pay by May 17 without any penalty and interest. They may avail the provision of paying estimated tax in advance by April 15, 2021.

■ Rang Barse...

# Holi festivities muted amid Covid concerns

**H**oli, the festival of colours just went by. And, Bollywood has ensured that everyone who knows about Hindi films will by default know about this festival.

While local governments in India had banned public celebration of Holi this year due to the pandemic, families and close groups had small-scale celebrations. Many, including celebrities posted photographs of their celebrations on social media.

Besides being the riot of fun and colours that it is, Holi has very strong roots in Hindu mythology. It coincides with the full moon day (Poornima) of Falgun month every year. The festival is celebrated over two days. The first one is when the Holi pyre is lit, also called the Holika Dahan. Legend has it that Holika, the sister of demon king Hiranyakashyap, sat on the pyre with the latter's son and her nephew



Taimur Ali Khan playing Holi

Prahlad in her lap. Hiranyakashyap wanted everyone to worship him as God, while Prahlad continued to worship Lord Vishnu. Furious, Hiranyakashyap decided to get rid of his son. When all other attempts failed, he approached his sister Holika, who had a boon that would protect her from fire. However, when she entered the fire with Prahlad, even

The usual 'dhamaal' and 'masti' were missing at most places, but the spirit of the festival is intact

the boon could not protect her. She died and the young boy came out unscathed. Thus, the festival came to signify the victory of good over evil.

Another legend talks about Radha-Krishna and Gopis playing with colour on what later came to be known as 'Dhuleti'

In the United States and other countries, with a significant presence of the Indian Diaspora, Holi is celebrated in temples and by associations. For instance, in New Jersey, Holi is celebrated at Dwarkadhish Temple at Parlin and Shri Swaminarayan Temple- Agna Upasana center, Monmouth junction as well as other locations like Gayatri Chetna Center, Piscataway, Sanatan Temple, Parsippany attract.

Here's hoping for and praying that we can enjoy the festival, subdued by the pandemic this year, in its full glory!

# Time to renew our water pledge

This crisis is not something in the distant future; it is here, in our face. Globally, more than 1.42 billion people live in water-scarce areas, according to UNICEF. March 22 is celebrated as World Water Day.

# New York

**A**ccording to UN-Water, scarcity of water already affects every continent. Its use has been growing globally at more than twice the rate of population increase in the last century, and an increasing number of regions are reaching the limit at which water services can be sustainably delivered, especially in arid regions. March 22 was World Water Day, a day when we pledge, or renew an old one, to do something about the precious commodity called water.

Globally, more than 1.42 billion people, including 450 million children, live in areas of high, or extremely high, water vulnerability, according to a new analysis released by UNICEF. This means that 1 in 5 children worldwide does not have enough water to meet their everyday needs.

"The world's water crisis is not simply



A woman in Madagascar (UN Water)

coming, it is here, and climate change will only make it worse," said UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore. "Children are the biggest victims. When wells dry-up, children are the ones missing school to fetch water. When droughts diminish food supplies, children suffer from malnutrition and stunting. When floods hit, children fall ill from waterborne illnesses. And when water resources decline,

children cannot wash their hands to fight off diseases." Children in 37 'hotspot' countries face especially dire circumstances in terms of absolute numbers, the proportions of children affected, and where global resources, support and urgent action must be mobilized. This list includes Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Haiti, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Sudan, Tanzania and Yemen.

Amid the rising population and climate change, the availability of fresh water is becoming worrisome in South Asia, particularly in Pakistan, which may face absolute water scarcity by 2040.

Taiwan will from next month ration water for more than one million households in the centre of the island because of a drought, Economy Minister Wang Mei-hua said last week. However, the technology hub of Hsinchu will not be affected.

Agencies

Filmfare awards 2021

# Irrfan, Tapsee named best actors

Irrfan was given the award posthumously: His son Baabil received it; Anubhav Sinha's 'Thappad' walks away with seven awards, the maximum

#Mumbai

It had to be a star-studded event on Saturday night (March 27). After all, the stars were being recognized for their performances at the 66th edition of the Filmfare awards.

Irrfan Khan was posthumously honoured with the best actor award for 'Angrezi Medium'. He was also given the Lifetime Achievement Award. Irrfan passed away last year in Mumbai. Amid the sadness, his son Baabil received the awards on his behalf.

Taapsee Pannu won the Best Actress Award for Thappad, which also bagged the Best Film, Best Story and Best Editing trophies. Amitabh Bachchan won the Best Actor (Critics) award for his performance in Gulabo Sitabo while the best actor-female (critics) award went to Tillotama Shome for Sir. Om Raut bagged the best director award for Tanhaji: The Unsung Warrior. Saif Ali Khan won the award for Best Actor in Supporting Role for his work in Tanhaji: The Unsung Warrior while Kajol's Devi won the Best Short Film (Popular Choice) award.

## Babil wears dad Irrfan's clothes to award function



Best Actor In A Leading Role (Male)

Irrfan (Angrezi Medium)



Best Actor In A Leading Role (Female)

Taapsee Pannu (Thappad)



Best Actor (Critics)

Amitabh Bachchan - Gulabo Sitabo



Best Director

Om Raut  
(Tanhaji: The Unsung Warrior)



Best Lyrics

Gulzar-  
Chhappak  
(Chhappak)



Best Music  
Album

Pritam  
(Ludo)

Babil Khan, Irrfan Khan's son, received the Filmfare awards on behalf of his father. On Sunday, Babil revealed that the clothes he wore belonged to his father. In a clip that he shared, Babil's mother Sutapa Sikdar can be seen helping him getting ready for the awards, which she also attended.

"Mamma dressing me up - So, in my little speech..., I basically said, 'This is not my place to say anything. People always say that you cannot fit into your father's shoes but at least I can fit into his clothes.

I just want to show all my gratitude to the audience and our industry..."

Voluntary Content  
Compilation  
FIA NY-NJ-CT and  
Community Volunteers

Contributors  
Chandrakant Trivedi,  
Amit Yadav

Voluntary Graphics  
Compilation  
Gracia Marcom