

News in brief

◆ **India's police said** yesterday its forces had killed a "dreaded" Maoist rebel commander responsible for one of the deadliest attacks by the guerrillas, along with five other insurgents. New Delhi has vowed to end the decades-long insurgency entirely by March 31, 2026, with Tuesday's killing marking the latest in a series of reported victories against the shrinking rebel force. Senior police officer Mahesh Chandra Laddha told reporters that Madvi Hidma, a top Maoist commander, his wife Raje, and four other fighters were "killed in an encounter with police" in Andhra Pradesh state. Laddha called Hidma the "most dreaded Maoist commander", who had a bounty of 10 million rupees (around \$110,000) on his head. Police also seized assault rifles, pistols and explosives. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) hailed the operation, noting that Hidma had masterminded the April 2010 ambush in Dantewada, Chhattisgarh, that killed 76 security personnel -- one of the worst massacres in India's recent history.



Indian police say Maoist leader of worst rebel massacre killed

◆ **Japan warns citizens in China over safety amid Taiwan row** Japan has warned its citizens in China to be careful of their surroundings and to avoid big crowds, as a diplomatic row spirals over Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's comments on Taiwan. The escalating spat has already seen Beijing advise Chinese citizens to avoid travelling to Japan and hit Tokyo stocks. The screenings

of at least two Japanese movies will also be postponed in China, state media reported. "Pay attention to your surroundings and avoid as much as possible squares where large crowds gather, or places that are likely to be identified as being used by many Japanese people," the Japanese embassy in China said in a statement on its website dated Monday. Beijing on Tuesday vowed to "protect the safety" of foreigners in China, but said it had again lodged a "strong protest" with Tokyo over Takaichi's comments.

◆ **Chip giant Nvidia and Microsoft announced** Tuesday investments totaling \$15 billion in AI startup Anthropic, creator of the Claude chatbot, as the AI investment frenzy continues amid emerging fears of a bubble on Wall Street. Nvidia committed up to \$10 billion while Microsoft -- which owns 27 percent of Anthropic rival OpenAI -- pledged up to \$5 billion to the maker of Claude AI models. The deal was part of a sweeping agreement that saw Anthropic commit to purchasing \$30 billion in Microsoft's cloud computing capacity and adopt the latest versions of Nvidia's chip technology. "We're increasingly going to be customers of each other," said Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella in an online video announcing the deal. "We will use Anthropic models. They will use our infrastructure, and we'll go to market together to help our customers realize the value of AI."

Nvidia, Microsoft invest \$15 billion in AI startup Anthropic



SPOTLIGHT

US lawmakers set for explosive vote on Epstein files

AFP | Washington, United States

US lawmakers are expected to vote Tuesday for the release of government records on sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, in defiance of President Donald Trump's attempts to keep a lid on one of the country's most notorious scandals.

After months of resistance, behind-the-scenes pressure and frenzied lobbying against making the material public, Trump threw in the towel on Sunday as it became clear that much of the Republican Party in Congress was poised to defy him.

The House of Representatives now looks all but certain to approve -- perhaps even unanimously -- the Epstein Files Transparency Act compelling publication of unclassified documents detailing the investigation into the disgraced financier's operations and 2019 death in custody, ruled a suicide.

Lawmakers say the public deserves answers in a case with over 1,000 alleged victims.

Trump says the files will expose powerful Democrats' connections to Epstein, but the Republican president himself faces

uncomfortable scrutiny over his years-long friendship with the man alleged to have supplied rich and influential men with underaged women.

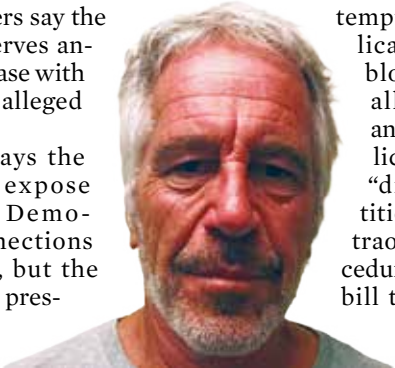
Killing the bill in the Senate after a lopsided House vote would be awkward to defend, and Trump has pledged not to veto the legislation if it reaches his desk.

But expectations of damning new revelations could prove premature.

The Justice Department has wide latitude hold back any information if release "would jeopardize an active federal investigation" and Trump ordered officials in a widely criticized intervention last week to probe Epstein's ties with high-profile Democrats.

The saga has exposed rare fissures in support for the Republican leader, who campaigned on releasing the files but changed course after taking office, accusing Democrats of pushing a "hoax."

After multiple attempts by Republican leaders to block the vote, all Democrats and four Republicans signed a "discharge petition" -- an extraordinary procedure forcing the bill to the House floor.



Members of the UN Security Council raise their hands to vote in favor of a draft resolution to authorize an International Stabilization Force in Gaza

Israel hails Trump Gaza plan after UN Security Council vote

Hamas rejected the resolution for the deployment of an international force

● Security Council voted Monday in favour of a US-drafted resolution

● To work with Israel and Egypt and newly-trained Palestinian police

● There were 13 votes in favour of the text and none against

● The US won the backing of several Arab and Muslim-majority nations, publishing a joint statement of support for the text signed by Qatar, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Pakistan, Jordan, and Turkey

AFP | Jerusalem, Undefined

Israel yesterday hailed Donald Trump's Gaza peace plan after its endorsement by the UN Security Council, as Hamas rejected the resolution which calls for the deployment of an international force in the Palestinian territory.

The United Nations Security Council voted Monday in favour of a US-drafted resolution bolstering President Trump's plan for the Gaza Strip -- which has allowed a fragile ceasefire to hold between Israel and Hamas since October 10.

The peace plan notably authorises the creation of an international force that would work with Israel and Egypt and newly-trained Palestinian police to help secure border areas and demilitarise Gaza.

Following the vote, Palestinians living in Gaza embraced a chance for life to improve, but had little faith that Israel would comply.



A displacement camp in Gaza City

Trump posted on social media that the vote "acknowledging and endorsing the BOARD OF PEACE, which will be chaired by me...will go down as one of the biggest approvals in the History of the United Nations, (and) will lead to further Peace all over the World."

Hamas says UN Gaza resolution does not meet Palestinians' rights

Gaza City, Palestinian Territories

Gaza's Hamas rulers said they rejected Monday's UN resolution which calls for an international force to be deployed in the territory, saying it fails to respect the "demands and rights" of the Palestinians.

"This resolution does not meet the level of our Palestinian people's political and humanitarian demands and

rights," the Islamist militant group said in a statement.

The statement also decried the establishment of an international force whose "mission includes the disarmament" of Palestinian groups in Gaza.

"The resolution imposes an international trusteeship on the Gaza Strip, which our people, its forces, and its constituent groups reject," the statement continued.

"Any international decision now is welcome. The important thing is that the war ends," said

39-year-old Saeb Al-Hassanat, who lives in a school sheltering displaced people in central Gaza.

"It doesn't matter who rules us. We welcome international administration of Gaza," he told AFP, but added that "without strong pressure from the US, Israel will not comply with any decision, and the Security Council resolution will remain worthless."

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office hailed Trump's plan on Tuesday, saying it would lead to "peace and prosperity because it insists upon full demilitarisation, disarmament and the deradicalisation of Gaza".

On X, Netanyahu's office said the plan would also "lead to further integration of Israel and its neighbours as well as expansion of Abraham Accords," under which a few Arab countries have normalised ties with Israel.

There were 13 votes in favour of the text and none against, with Russia and China both abstaining but not deploying their veto as permanent members.

"Peace all over the world"

Trump posted on social media that the vote would lead to "further peace all over the world".

But Hamas, which is excluded by the resolution from any governance role in Gaza, said it did not meet Palestinians' "political and humanitarian demands and rights".

In a statement, the Islamist militant group decried the establishment of an international force and said the resolution imposes "an international trusteeship on the Gaza Strip, which our people, its forces, and its constituent groups reject".

The peace plan authorises the creation of an International Stabilisation Force that is mandated to work on the "permanent decommissioning of weapons from non-state armed groups", protecting civilians and securing humanitarian aid corridors.