

China detects 5 new cases of mpox strain

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Wizkid, Jada Pollock welcome their third child

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Sanwo-Olu signs record-breaking N3.366trn Lagos budget into law

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The New Daily Prime

Tinubu seeks enhanced currency swap between China, Nigeria page 12

“We still demand more in the area of currency swap. The level you have approved as a government for Nigeria is inadequate considering our programme. If you can increase that, it will be well appreciated. Our bond should grow stronger and become unbreakable,” Tinubu said. *continue on page 12*



Police nab human traffickers with 59 children in FCT PAGE 2

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Sunday Igboho: Ethnic groups should separate if Nigeria isn't working PAGE 2

Sunday Igboho: Ethnic groups should separate if Nigeria isn't working

By Friday Omosola

Yoruba Nation advocate, Sunday Adeyemo, popularly known as Sunday Igboho, has renewed his call for the secession of the Yoruba people from Nigeria.

Sunday Igboho gained prominence for his agitation for Yoruba independence during the administration of former President Muhammadu Buhari, a movement that led to his imprisonment.

In October 2023, he regained his freedom in Benin Republic, where he had been detained following his escape from Nigerian authorities in 2021.

In February 2024, he returned to Nigeria after nearly three years in exile.

In a viral video online on Thursday he expressed concerns over the declining sense of patriotism among Nigerians, citing corruption, insecurity, and



Sunday Igboho (PHOTO CREDIT)

their global exposure and experiences position them to build a progressive and prosperous Yoruba nation modelled after advanced European societies.

He said, "Even at the airport, there is no

"Our Yoruba youths are capable of transforming the Yoruba nation. Many of them have travelled the world and gained valuable knowledge. When they return to Yoruba land, they can use their experiences to develop and modernize it, just like European nations."

Police nab human traffickers with 59 children in FCT

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The police command of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) has intercepted a group of suspected human traffickers transporting 59 children.

The FCT police commissioner, Tunji Disu disclosed that operatives led by Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Sarki Umar halted a white Peugeot 15-seater bus, commonly known as a J5 on January 6.

The vehicle was en route to Nasarawa State when it was intercepted.

According to Disu, the bus was carrying children aged between four and 12 years, allegedly trafficked from Kano.

He added that Ali Ibrahim, the driver, and Alhassan Ibrahim, his assistant, both Kano State residents, were arrested on the spot.

Disu said preliminary investigations showed that the children were being transported to Nasarawa under the guise of receiving training.

"On January 6, 2025, at about 1530 hours, a team led by deputy superintendent of police Sarki Umar intercepted a white Peugeot 15 bus with Reg. No. KMC 283 ZJ along the Abuja-Kano route," he said.

"The vehicle was driven by Ali Ibrahim, a male resident of Kano State, accompanied by his motor boy, Al-Hassan Ibrahim, also of Kano State.

"The bus was found to be transporting 59 male children aged between 4 and 12 years.

Preliminary investigations revealed



that the children, who came from different families, were being transported by one Idris Usman, a male resident of Nasarawa State.

"He allegedly travelled to Kano State to convene the children en route to Nasarawa State under the pretext of training them."

THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

PUBLIC NOTICE COLOUR

PRODUCT COLOUR

**EFFECTIVE FROM
DECEMBER 1, 2024**

SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	372,500.00
HALF PAGE	213,000.00
QUARTER PAGE	106,500.00
14X2	118,000.00
10X6	261,585.50
10X5	255,238.00
10X4	206,890.50
10X3	179,608.00
9X6	254,977.00
9X5	225,738.00
9X4	193,500.00
9X3	166,223.50
8X6	225,368.50
8X3	106,934.50
7X4	180,173.50
6X4	100,434.50
6X3	82,750.00
6X2	52,499.50
5X6	123,749.50
5X5	110,000.00
5X4	76,833.00
5X3	66,875.00
5X2	42,916.50
4X4	60,166.50
4X3	36,499.50
4X2	29,333.50
3X3	28,000.00
3X2	17,400.00
2X2	13,000.00
2X1	8,600.00
1X1	4,400.00

SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	329,868.50
HALF PAGE	192,500.00
QUARTER PAGE	100,000.00
14X2	109,500.00
10X6	242,500.00
10X5	237,500.00
10X4	192,500.00
10X3	171,000.00
9X6	232,500.00
9X5	206,000.00
9X4	177,500.00
9X3	150,000.00
8X6	216,000.00
8X3	98,500.00
7X4	164,002.00
6X4	94,010.50
6X3	78,500.00
6X2	47,500.00
5X5	100,000.00
5X4	61,500.00
5X3	57,819.00
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4X4	55,000.00
4X3	31,000.00
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1X1	4,315.00

POLITICAL COLOUR

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DOUBLE SPREAD	885,000.00
FULL PAGE	420,000.00
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QUARTER PAGE	115,012.50

POLITICAL BLACK & WHITE

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DOUBLE SPREAD	745,000.00
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HALF PAGE	184,700.00
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CORPORATE BLACK & WHITE

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HALF PAGE	142,787.50
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PUBLIC NOTICE BLACK & WHITE

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10X4	103,963.00
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5X3	29,858.00
5X2	22,841.00
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4X3	N/A
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3X2	14,923.00
2X2	10,200.00
2X1	5,439.50
1X1	2,700.00

SPECIAL POSITIONS

2X6 FRONT PAGE	700,000.00
2X6 BACK PAGE	300,000.00
2X6 INSIDE PAGE	155,000.00
3X6 FRONT PAGE	1,200,000.00
4X6 FRONT PAGE	2,250,000.00
5X6 FRONT PAGE	3,350,000.00
10X6 FRONT PAGE	8,250,000.00
EARPIECE FRONT PAGE(1.5X2)	246,500.00
EARPIECE INSIDE PAGE(1.5X2)	117,875.00
EARPIECE BACK PAGE	236,796.50
CENTRE SPREAD COLOUR (PUBLIC NOTICE)	1,027,000.00
CENTRE SPREAD COLOUR (PRODUCT)	929,000.00
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CENTRE SPREAD HALF COLOUR	575,000.00
CENTRESPREAD STRIP COLOUR	191,668.50
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DOUBLE SPREAD HALF COLOUR	432,881.00
DOUBLE SPREAD STRIP COLOUR	144,294.00
CENTRE SPREAD B&W	835,000.00
CENTRE SPREAD HALF PAGE B &W	550,000.00
DOUBLE SPREAD B &W	725,000.00
DOUBLE SPREAD HALF B &W	425,000.00
FULL WRAP AROUND	15,000,000.00
HALF WRAP AROUND	8,500,000.00
HALF PAGE FRONT	5,500,000.00

ALLURE RATE

SIZE	RATE	TOTAL
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DOUBLE SPREAD	806,250.00	
ALLURE COVER	750,000.00	
(IBC) Inside Back Cover	376,250.00	
(IFC) Inside Front Cover	430,000.00	
(BC) Back Cover	483,750.00	
Full Page	430,000.00	
10X5	295,625.00	
Half Page	225,000.00	
EVENT	250,000.00	

PICTURE & CAPTION

SIZE	RATE	7.5% VAT	TOTAL
PHOTO NEWS PAGE 2	50,000.00	3,750.00	53,750.00
PHOTO NEWS (3X3)	30,000.00	2,250.00	32,250.00
PHOTO NEWS (4X4)	53,333.30	4,250.00	57,583.30
PRESS RELEASE (4X4)	30,000.00	2,250.00	32,250.00
EVENT COVERAGE	100,000.00	7,500.00	107,500.00
FEATURES	200,000.00	15,000.00	215,000.00

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Tinubu mourns 6 soldiers killed in Borno terrorist attack

By New Daily Prime

President Bola Tinubu has conveyed his deepest sympathy to the military authorities following the loss of six soldiers during the January 4, 2025, terrorist attack on an army base in Sabon Gida, Damboa, Borno State.

In a statement by one of his spokesmen, Bayo Onanuga on Wednesday, President Tinubu his heartfelt condolences to the families of the fallen soldiers, whose sacrifice in defending our nation will forever be honoured and remembered.

In the wake of this tragic incident, the president called for a thorough investigation to uncover the circumstances that led to it and ensure that it served as a valuable lesson to prevent similar occurrences.

He commended the armed forces for their swift and decisive response, particularly the air component, in launching effective retaliatory strikes. The targeted air raids resulted in the significant neutralisation of numerous terrorists and the destruction of their assets as they attempted to flee.

Tinubu remarked, “This resolute action by the Army demonstrates the capability and readiness of our military to confront and defeat threats to our nation’s security. Their actions testify to our resolve to eradicate terrorism and banditry, paving the way for a future where peace and security prevail for all Nigerians.

“I extend heartfelt gratitude and sympathy to our military and security forces on behalf of a grateful nation.

“Your sacrifices and dedication do not go unnoticed, and we stand firmly behind you in this ongoing fight to eliminate these threats.”

Moreover, he urged the military to proactively take the war to the camps of bandits and terrorists. He particularly emphasised the Northwest, where these criminals



continue to threaten the lives and homes of innocent villagers.

Additionally, President Tinubu appealed to Nigerians and the media to support the military’s efforts to restore peace and security in our beloved nation.

Court remands teacher for assault on 3-year-old in Lagos

By Friday Omosola

An Ogba Magistrate Court in Lagos State has remanded a private school teacher, Stella Nwadigo, who was captured in a viral video assaulting a three-year-old pupil.

The New Daily Prime earlier reported that the Lagos State Police Command arrested Nwadigo after the disturbing footage went viral.

Following the incident, both the police and the Lagos State Ministry of Education launched investigations into the matter.

Providing an update on Thursday, the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency (DSVA) confirmed that the teacher has been remanded in a correctional facility.

In a statement shared on its X page,



DSVA revealed that Nwadigo appeared before Magistrate M.O. Kusanu and was arraigned on two charges.

She pleaded not guilty to the allegations. Her defence counsel applied for bail, which the court

granted at ₦200,000 with two verifiable sureties.

The statement read, “Update: Following the ongoing viral case of child abuse, all concerned parties appeared today, 10th January 2024, at the Ogba Magistrate Court.

Jihadists kill 28 Beninese soldiers near Niger, Burkina border

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Not less than 28 soldiers were killed in an attack in northern Benin as violence blamed on jihadists based in neighbouring countries increases, a security source told AFP on Thursday.

According to the high-ranking official, the strike took place on Wednesday evening near the border with insurgency-hit Burkina Faso and Niger.

Reports say attacks in northern Benin have increased in recent years with authorities accusing members of the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda groups based in neighbouring countries.

The military source said, "We are continuing cleaning-up operations. Forty assailants have been neutralised so far."

The violence has largely struck the border area with Burkina Faso.

Gunmen in December killed three soldiers and wounded four others who were guarding an oil pipeline in

northeast Benin.

In June, seven Beninese troops were killed in an attack at the Pendjari National Park on the border with Burkina Faso.

Beninese authorities, who rarely comment on attacks, reported in April 2023 about 20 cross-border incursions since 2021.

A diplomatic source told AFP that 121 Beninese military personnel had been killed between 2021 and December 2024.

"Currently, it is clear that the threat is intensifying, the more the situation in Niger and Burkina Faso deteriorates, the harder it gets for Benin," the diplomatic source said earlier this week.

The source added that the Beninese army was still "under construction"



and faced the challenge of training its forces while remaining operational.

"There are results, (the Beninese army) can kill terrorists but do not want to communicate about it so it is not always visible — especially so as not to inform the jihadists of their strategy and because it is anxiety-inducing", the source also said.

Benin in January 2022 deployed nearly 3,000 troops to secure its borders as part of Operation Mirador.

Lagos Commissioner, Toke Benson denies slapping allegation

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Lagos State Commissioner for Tourism, Arts and Culture, Mrs. Toke Benson-Awoyinka has denied reports that she physically assaulted a man by slapping him for recording her on phone.

In a widely circulated video by Sahara Reporters, the Commissioner was seen asking a man recording her with his phone to leave the premises but the unidentified man responded that no one will leave the venue.

The commissioner who got up from her seat later approached the man and said 'Maa fo phone owo e' (literally translated as 'I will smash the phone you are recording with').

An unidentified man was heard shouting 'How dare you slap him?'.

Speaking to TheScrutiny on Thursday,



Benson-Awoyinka said she never slapped or physically assaulted anyone.

"No, I slapped no one. Absolutely no one" she said.

The video has generated mixed reaction from netizens, as many are calling for a thorough investigation into the incident.

NAFDAC DG reveals agency is severely understaffed

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The Director-General of the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), Professor Mojisola Adeyeye, has revealed that the agency is severely understaffed, with its current workforce falling far short of the necessary numbers to effectively carry out its duties.

In a news conference held on Thursday in Lagos, Adeyeye disclosed that the agency is operating with approximately 2,000 staff members, despite the fact that, based on Nigeria's population, NAFDAC should have a workforce of no less than 10,000.

She explained that the number of staff needed by any regulatory agency depends on the population size it serves. "It is easier to regulate a country with one million people than a country with 300 million people," she stated.

The NAFDAC Director-General expressed the strain the agency's current staff is under, emphasising that they are "burning candles at both ends" to safeguard the health of Nigerians. Adeyeye clarified, however, that the agency is not asking for the full complement of 10,000 staff immediately but instead is requesting an increase of "double or triple" the number currently employed.

Looking ahead to 2025, Adeyeye outlined five key strategic pillars that NAFDAC will focus on to strengthen its regulatory role and protect the nation's health.

These pillars are: strong governance and leadership, maternal, newborn, and child health, institutionalising best practices, ensuring the safety and quality of regulated products, and enhancing the monitoring of the supply chain.

Reflecting on the past seven years of leadership, Adeyeye expressed pride in NAFDAC's accomplishments, while also acknowledging that much more remains to be done. She highlighted the need to continually strengthen the regulatory system to ensure the protection of the public health.

"Reflection on the past seven years has brought into focus the many



accomplishments that have been achieved in NAFDAC, and so many others to be attained," she said. "This realisation has sharpened my focus on how to strategically work towards continued strengthening of the regulatory system."

In line with NAFDAC's vision for 2025, the agency will focus on improving access to quality regulated products. Strong governance and leadership will be central to ensuring that staff remain motivated and disciplined, with an emphasis on continuous training and development. Adeyeye highlighted that the agency's focus would particularly centre on maternal, newborn, and child health, noting that the safety and quality of regulated products are critical in reducing maternal deaths and child morbidity.

She specifically mentioned the importance of paediatric antimalarials and antibiotics, emphasising that manufacturers would be encouraged to develop paediatric medicines and work towards achieving WHO prequalification.

As the agency prepares for the year ahead, NAFDAC remains committed to enhancing the safety of regulated products and contributing to the wellbeing of Nigerians, despite the significant challenges posed by its understaffing.

Police restructure strategies to tackle kidnapping, rescue victims

By Friday Omosola



To bolster internal security and ensure the safety of Nigerians, the Nigeria Police Force has reiterated its commitment to re-strategize operations to combat kidnapping and related crimes nationwide.

In a statement, police spokesperson Olumuyiwa Adejobi highlighted the force's determination, showcasing their operational expertise and coordination during a recent hostage rescue mission.

On December 31, 2024, operatives of the Nigeria Police carried out a successful rescue operation in Kwande Local Government Area (LGA) of Benue State. The operation resulted in the neutralization of three kidnappers.

Adejobi disclosed that officers from the Vandiekya Police Divisional Headquarters responded swiftly to a distress call reporting the abduction of one Tor Gajir by unidentified gunmen in Kwande LGA.

Upon receiving the report, the police immediately escalated their investigation, which led them to a suspect identified as Desmond

Ahar. The suspect was apprehended and, under interrogation, admitted to being part of the kidnapping syndicate.

Ahar subsequently led the police to the location where the victim was being held in Adikpo, Benue State, enabling the successful rescue of Tor Gajir.

“Upon arrival at the kidnappers’ den, the kidnappers spotted the police operatives and immediately engaged them in a gun duel. In the ensuing confrontation, officers were able to neutralize three of the suspects, while others fled with bullet wounds.

“The victim was rescued unhurt and immediately given medical attention to assess any physical or psychological impact. The success of the operation also led to the recovery of 2 AK-47s and 6 loaded magazines, with several live ammunition. Efforts are intensified to apprehend the fleeing member of the gang and recover other arms”, he said.

Adejobi revealed that during a similar operation in Nasarawa State, police operatives from the state command

discovered an abandoned Sienna vehicle on December 28, 2024, along the Keffi-Kaduna Highway in Angwan Wayo Village, suspected to have been involved in an attack.

He explained that the operatives followed the trail, uncovering and rescuing two hostages who had been abducted by kidnappers. The victims were rescued unharmed, while efforts to apprehend the fleeing kidnappers remain ongoing.

Adejobi further disclosed that on January 7, 2025, police operatives from the Bayelsa State Command intercepted a suspect, Usman Mohammed, while he was en route to Rivers State.

“A thoroughly conducted search led to the recovery of 1 AK-47 rifle, 1 Type 09 AR, 2 AK-47 Magazines, 2 Type 09 AR Magazines, and 120 rounds of ammunition of various calibres concealed in the vehicle. The suspect has been arrested, and the investigation is still ongoing.”

He stated that Inspector-General of Police (IGP) Kayode Egbetokun praised the operatives for their remarkable achievements, both in the affected states and across the nation.

Adejobi mentioned that the IGP urged the operatives to maintain their momentum in achieving excellence in internal security and public safety across Nigeria.

Adejobi said, “The incidents highlight the bravery and dedication of our police officers to keep our communities safe. The IGP further encourages members of the community to remain vigilant and volunteer to play their role towards ensuring public safety and general security in Nigeria.”

Graduate rues 5 LASU years, ends up selling 'Zobo'

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

A Nigerian graduate has lamented that after spending five years at Lagos State University (LASU), she had to end up vending a local flavoured drink, zobo..

Taking to her TikTok page, she shared the disheartening story, explaining how she now works as a zobo vendor to make ends meet.

She lamented that after spending half a decade pursuing her education at the university, she eventually ended up a zobo seller after graduation, Eyes Of Lagos reports.

"If I had known it would be zobo I'd end up selling, I wouldn't have wasted 5 years of my life in LASU," she captioned her post.

Her video has since sparked various reactions from viewers. Listed below are some of them.

@gbemmy cakes commented: "Education is never a waste. Can you compare yourself to a roadside zobo

seller? No."

@Gozi Oleks asked: "Which course did you study? Can you defend your certificate?"

@Lil responded: "Abeg, don't fear me oo I'm also a fresh graduate from LASU."

@Zayyy said: "Seeing this while sitting in a hot class in LAS God, please help."

@9jahairgrowthdoctor_Cosmetics shared: "Sorry sorry I studied microbiology for 5 years too, and now I'm selling haircare and skincare products ."

@Adetut wrote: "Which course did you study? My friend asked me to



ask @ ."

@IVORY added: "Omo, sometimes life is about connections . Thanks to my uncle who patiently waited for me to graduate , I didn't have to wait for work, work was waiting for m ."

@JOSENTIALS said: "Thank God I started mine before entering school. Omo, this thing is not even funn ."

Navy dismantles illegal refineries in Ondo

By Friday Omosola

The Nigerian Navy's Forward Operating Base (FOB) in Igbokoda has dismantled nine illegal refinery sites and confiscated 20,000 litres of crude oil along with 15,000 litres of illegally refined diesel in the Obenla community, located in Ilaje Local Government Area of Ondo State.

Navy Captain Aliyu Usman, Commander of the Base, revealed this during a press briefing on Thursday.

According to him, the operation, conducted on January 6, 2025, was based on credible intelligence.

He added that the perpetrators fled the scene before the arrival of naval operatives, likely alerted by the fear of arrest.

Usman described the operation as a significant milestone in the Navy's commitment to combating illegal activities and protecting Nigeria's



environment.

He further urged residents of the Obenla community to desist from supporting or harbouring illegal activities, highlighting the environmental and economic dangers associated with crude oil theft and illegal refining.

The Commander also advised those involved in such unlawful ventures to embrace legitimate means of livelihood, assuring that the Navy would not relent in its mission to uphold security and order.

Osun high court adjourns hearing of LG election suit

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye



The federal government has agreed to demands for tariff hikes in the telecommunication industry. This is expected in the coming weeks, as the government aims to address sustainability challenges in the telecom sector. This implies that prices of calls, data and SMS will go up for the average Nigerian.

However, the hike will fall short of the 100 percent increase requested by service providers, with the government seeking to balance sector growth and protecting Nigerians from excessive financial burdens.

Bosun Tijani, the minister of communications, innovation, and digital economy, disclosed this during an industry stakeholder forum in Abuja on Wednesday.

“The essence of this gathering is recognizing the critical role the telecom sector plays in driving Nigeria’s economic development,” Tijani said.

“Tariff will go up. That’s the verdict. But

it won’t be by 100%. We need to ensure that as a sector, we put the right regulations in place that can ensure the growth of this sector, continue to contribute to job creation, but also enable other key sectors in the country as well.”

He disclosed that the government had commissioned a study to evaluate the financial needs of the telecom sector while minimizing the potential impact on consumers.

Aminu Maida, Executive Vice Chairman, Nigerian Telecommunications Commission (NCC), noted that tariff adjustments will be accompanied by measures to simplify billing systems and increase transparency.

“We’ve revised our quality of service regulations, bringing the entire value chain into scope for compliance, from MNOs to tower codes and transmission companies.

“So when we do see these tariff modifications, it’s also going to come with simplification. So every MNO or every service provider must comply with a simplified template. To show Nigerians what you are charging per minute, per voice, per SMS, and per megabyte of data.

“We’re moving away from a regime where you have a main rate, then a bonus at a different rate, which complicates understanding.”

Maida emphasized the need for meaningful connectivity and highlighted the government’s commitment to investing in infrastructure to ensure quality service across Nigeria.

He noted that while private sector investment had traditionally driven the sector, the government was stepping in to accelerate development.

NCDC allays fears over HMPV, says no cause for alarm

By Friday Omosola

The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) has assured Nigerians that the Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) does not currently pose a significant threat to the country.

The New Daily Prime earlier reported about the HMPV, the virus outbreaks which has raised global concerns in some regions.

Speaking on Channels Television's Sunrise Daily on Thursday, NCDC Director-General Jide Idris stated that there is no need for alarm.

He added that HMPV is not a new virus but just not widely known, saying "Over the years, it has been linked to respiratory infections, particularly among children and the elderly."

Idris noted that HMPV is similar to other respiratory viruses, such as the flu and influenza, which are common causes of respiratory illnesses.

Idris emphasised that the NCDC is closely monitoring the global situation and remains on high alert, with no reported cases of HMPV in

Nigeria.

"We are in a monitoring and alert phase, and that's why again we take instructions from WHO globally because every country is supposed to report cases like this, any case; any problem to WHO – those things that they consider might become global problems later so that they can alert every other country to get prepared," he said.

Drawing from Nigeria's experiences with past outbreaks like Ebola and COVID-19, Idris noted that the country has developed robust public health infrastructure and capabilities.

READ ALSO: Lassa Fever, CSM: Be hygienic, NCDC boss warns Nigerians
He said Nigeria has learned valuable lessons from those incidents and put



measures in place to ensure they respond effectively to emerging threats, noting that the focus is on preparation, not panic.

As precautionary measures, the NCDC advises Nigerians to avoid overcrowded areas, practice regular handwashing, and follow general hygiene protocols to reduce the risk of infection.

Sanwo-Olu signs record-breaking N3.366trn Lagos budget into law

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, has signed the 2025 Appropriation Bill into law, approving a record-breaking budget of N3.366 trillion. The budget, themed "Budget of Sustainability," aims to provide a blueprint for continuity, resilience, and prosperity for Lagos residents.

The governor presented the Appropriation Bill to the Lagos State House of Assembly on November 21, 2024, proposing a total budget size of N3.005 trillion, comprising a total revenue of N2.597 trillion and deficit financing of N408.902 billion. The assembly later increased the budget to N3.366 trillion, which was passed into law.

According to Sanwo-Olu, the budget has a recurrent expenditure of N1.239

trillion, representing 41% of the total budget, and a capital expenditure of N1.766 trillion, representing 59%. The deficit financing will be sourced from external and internal loans and bonds.

The sectoral allocation in the budget shows that Economic Affairs will receive N908.699 billion, Environment will get N233.176 billion, Health will receive N204.005 billion, Education will get N208.376 billion, Security, Safety, and Public Order will receive N124.073 billion, and Social Protection will get N47.077 billion.

The approved budget is made up of N1.295 trillion as recurrent expenditure and N2.071 trillion as capital expenditure



for the year ending December 31, 2025. Sanwo-Olu stated that the budget is a blueprint for continuity, resilience, and prosperity for residents, and it will drive the state's development agenda.

Umahi sets deadlines for contractors handling federal projects

By Friday Omosola

The Minister of Works, David Umahi, has reiterated the federal government's (FG) commitment to completing critical infrastructure projects across Nigeria, setting strict expectations for contractors during his inspection of road projects in the South-East and South-South geopolitical zones.

During the tour, which began on January 7, 2025, Umahi visited several major projects, including the Enugu-Port Harcourt Expressway, the East-West Road, and the Bodo-Bonny Road.

While expressing satisfaction with some of the work done, the Minister also issued stern warnings to contractors lagging behind schedule, emphasising the need to meet deadlines.

Umahi
The Minister of Works, David Umahi (PHOTO CREDIT: Google)
At the East-West Road, Section III (Eleme Junction-Onne Junction), handled by Reynolds Construction Company (RCC), the Minister commended the quality of work but insisted on faster progress.

READ ALSO: Lagos – Calabar Coastal Highway for commissioning May 2025 – Umahi

He warned the contractor to deploy more resources or risk the re-scoping and re-award of the project if it is not delivered by the April 2025 deadline.

Inspecting the Enugu-Port Harcourt Expressway, Section III (Umuahia-Aba), Umahi praised Arab Contractors (Nig.) Ltd for their work but directed them to expand operations by deploying resources to two additional sites to meet the project timeline.

In Section IV (Aba-Port Harcourt),



managed by China Civil Engineering Construction Company (CCECC), the Minister expressed displeasure at the slow pace, citing the contractor's underutilization of the N21 billion allocated in 2024.

He instructed the Federal Controller of Works in Rivers State to issue a warning, with termination as a potential consequence if no improvements are made.

The Minister also visited the Bodo-Bonny Road, a crucial infrastructure project comprising a 2-lane road, 17 bridges totalling 3,200 meters, and reinforced concrete pavements.

Despite the contractor, Julius Berger Nigeria Plc (JBN), working through the holidays, Umahi was dissatisfied with the progress and urged an increase in

manpower and materials deployment.

Throughout his visits, Engr. Umahi emphasised the FG "Renewed Hope Agenda" which prioritises infrastructure development as a driver of economic growth.

He instructed Federal Controllers of Works to ensure the commissioning of at least four completed projects each between February and May 2025.

"There is no room for delays", the Minister stated firmly. "Contractors failing to meet their obligations will face a 14-day termination notice. The Ministry will enforce strict measures to ensure timely delivery."

Tinubu seeks enhanced currency swap between China, Nigeria

By Friday Omosola

President Bola Tinubu has called on the Chinese government to increase its currency swap arrangement with Nigeria, emphasising the need for deeper economic collaboration to fast-track infrastructure development.

The president made this appeal on Thursday during a meeting with the Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, at the State House in Abuja.

Tinubu highlighted the inadequacy of the current \$2 billion currency swap deal, urging China to consider a significant increase.

“We still demand more in the area of currency swap. The level you have approved as a government for Nigeria is inadequate considering our programme. If you can increase that, it will be well appreciated. Our bond should grow stronger and become unbreakable,” Tinubu said.

He also called for a review of the \$50 billion aid package pledged by Chinese President Xi Jinping to support Africa, stating that the continent’s infrastructure needs surpass the current commitment.

Tinubu Bola Tinubu and Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, at the State House in Abuja (PHOTO CREDIT: Bayo Onanuga)

He stressed the urgency of rapid development to ensure Africa keeps pace with other regions, adding, “Africa values the relationship with China, and we seek deeper collaboration for infrastructural development.”

In a push for global influence, Tinubu requested China’s support for Nigeria’s bid for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council.



“You are a member of the UN Security Council. We want you to use your influence to ensure Nigeria secures the seat,” the President said.

The president reflected on his visit to China during the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), noting that several Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) and action plans were signed.

READ ALSO: Tinubu appoints director for China-Nigeria strategic partnership

To ensure their implementation, Tinubu appointed Joseph Tegbe as Director General and Global Liaison for the Nigeria-China Strategic Partnership.

He expressed optimism about advancing the bilateral relationship, adding, “We are ready to meet developmental goals and contribute counterpart project funding.”

Tinubu also extended condolences to China over the recent earthquake in Tibet, commending the Chinese government for its swift response.

Meanwhile, Wang Yi expressed gratitude

for Nigeria’s adherence to the “One-China” principle and pledged China’s support for Nigeria’s “Renewed Hope Agenda,” regional security, and counterterrorism efforts.

The foreign minister revealed that Chinese investments in Nigeria would prioritize job creation and infrastructure, with funding for development projects already underway through the Chinese National Development Bank.

Yi also assured Nigeria of China’s backing for its bid to join the BRICS group and its inclusion in the United Nations Security Council, describing the latter as “a historical injustice that should be corrected.”

He further commended President Tinubu’s leadership, stating, “You brought Renewed Hope to the people of Nigeria. Your economy has sustained sound momentum, and Nigeria’s global influence has steadily increased. Under your leadership, Nigeria will achieve greater heights.”

Ganduje backs APC spokesman, dismisses Obi's threat-to-life claim

By Friday Omosola

The National Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Abdullahi Ganduje, has dismissed allegations made by Peter Obi, former Anambra State governor, claiming the party Publicity Secretary, Felix Morka threatened his life.

The New Daily Prime earlier reported that the 2023 presidential candidate of the Labour Party (LP) on his X page claimed Morka said he would face consequences for crossing the line with President Bola Tinubu's led administration.

He further alleged that the statement led to threats to his life, family and associates.

READ ALSO: APC tackles Obi on alleged poor governance

Reacting, Ganduje described the allegations as "sheer falsehood" and "malicious mischief" aimed at emotional blackmail.

Ganduje
The National Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Abdullahi Ganduje (PHOTO CREDIT: Google)

Ganduje in a statement he signed expressed disappointment over Obi's claim and labelled the accusation as misleading and unfounded.

He emphasised that it would have been ignored if not for the need to refute what he termed a "baseless narrative."

According to Ganduje, the claims arose from a misinterpretation of remarks made by APC National Publicity Secretary Felix Morka during an interview on Arise TV's "ThisDay Live" on January 4, 2025.



He clarified that Morka's comments neither threatened Obi nor his family, but rather addressed criticism of government policies.

The APC Chairman stressed that as a public figure, Obi has a responsibility to disseminate accurate information, warning that spreading falsehood erodes public trust.

READ ALSO: Morka didn't threaten you, APC tells Obi

He defended Morka's remarks, stating they were part of his duties as APC spokesperson to hold opposition figures accountable, as expected in a democracy.

"Morka's comments were strictly in response to questions regarding 'prophets of doom' and 'voodoo economics.' Nothing in his statement constituted a threat to Obi or anyone else," Ganduje asserted.

He further emphasised the importance of free speech, which he said applies equally to all Nigerians, including

members of the ruling party.

Ganduje urged Obi to embrace constructive criticism as part of the democratic process, rather than resorting to misinformation.

"Does Mr Obi expect the APC to remain silent while the opposition spreads falsehoods unchecked?" Ganduje queried. He affirmed that the party would continue to counter baseless allegations with facts and defend the government of President Tinubu against disinformation.

Reiterating the APC's commitment to democracy, Ganduje highlighted the party's dedication to engaging constructively with opposition actors while upholding the principles of free speech and accountability.

“We are not Igbo,” Ikwerre Group spills

By Helen Okechukwu



The apex umbrella body of Ikwerre ethnic, Ogbakor Ikwerre Cultural Organisation Worldwide (OICOW), has reaffirmed its ancestral root, declaring that they are not Igbos but purely Rivers people.

While speaking to journalists on Thursday at the Obiri Ikwerre Town Hall in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, the President General of Ogbakor Ikwerre Cultural Organisation Worldwide, Eze Barr. Godspower Onuekwa, made this declaration.

Clarifying this misconception of the ancestry root identification, the organisation said they remain an ethnic nationality and not a subgroup since the history of Nigeria.

Reminiscing over the peaceful coexistence enjoyed by the Ikwerre people, the President General warned against any gathering

leading to division for the people of Ikwerre nationality.

Despite sharing cultural and traditional similarities with nearby states, PG-OICOW bemoans the attempt by some Igbo expansionists to incorporate Ikwerre as a subset or subgroup of any other ethnic group in all of Nigeria.

Ikwerre ethnicity is made of four Local Government Areas (LGA), which include Ikwerre (KELGA), Emohua (EMOLGA), Obio/Akpor (OBALGA), and Port Harcourt City (PHALGA).

Read Also: Sunday Igboho: Ethnic groups should separate if Nigeria isn't working

The President General of OICOW noted that as an ethnic group, they have not mandated any person or group to speak on their behalf or label them as part of any ethnic group in Nigeria.

Pledging their loyalty to the Federal Government (FG), he said, “We are not part of BIAFRA in any circumstance or its agitators. We are peace-loving and hospitable people and would not want the peaceful disposition to be taken for granted or as a weakness or cowardice.”

Prominent figures present at the conference include distinguished Senator Andrew Uchendu, Prof. Wami Emenike, Chief Stephen Oparantu, Chief Paul Woke Nwonodi, among several others.

In a unified voice, the organisation urges the FG, State Government, and State Police Command to intervene and sanction anyone plotting to cause disunity among the Ikwerre ethnic group.

Albinism Association urges inclusive policies for 2025 Disability Summit

By Helen Okechukwu



The Albinism Association of Nigeria (AAN) has urged the Federal Government (FG) to prioritise the needs of marginalised groups, including the person with albinism, as the nation plans ahead of the 2025 Global Disability Summit (GDS).

The programme scheduled to be held in April aims to address issues of inclusion, equity, and accessibility for persons living with disabilities.

This appeal was made on Wednesday by the Executive Director of AAN, Dr. Bisi Bamishe, in a project launch tagged “Voices from the Field—From Commitment to Action: Implementing the Global Disability Summit Pledges for Persons with Albinism.”

Read Also: FG distributes foods to less-privileged, women families in Abuja

According to Dr. Bamishe, the aim of the initiative is to ensure inclusive commitments from FG.

She said, “We want pledges that truly reflect the needs and aspirations of persons with albinism and other marginalised groups.”

“The real work begins after the summit. Our mission is to ensure these promises don’t remain mere rhetoric. The post-summit phase is about action, accountability, and delivering meaningful results that positively impact lives.”

The association highlighted the persistent challenges faced by persons with albinism in Nigeria, which include stigmatisation, discrimination, and others.

Calling for key collaboration from the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD), among others, she stressed the need and importance of a joint voice to effectively implement equitable policies and decisions.

“We aim to foster awareness, advocate for inclusive policies, and ensure the effective implementation of GDS pledges at the grassroots level.”

Wizkid, Jada Pollock welcome their third child

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Global music superstar Wizkid and his manager-turned-partner, Jada Pollock, have joyfully welcomed their third child together, sparking joy worldwide.

The announcement came through a heartfelt Instagram story shared by Pollock. In the post, she posed in relaxed sweatpants, standing beside a baby's cot, her baby bump noticeably absent.

Details remain private
Details about the newborn, including their name, gender, and exact birth date, remain under wraps. The couple, known for maintaining a level of privacy regarding their family life, has yet to share further information.

Challenging pregnancy journey

The news of their latest addition comes after Pollock opened up about a challenging start to her pregnancy.

In December, she revealed a harrowing health scare during the first trimester. Pollock disclosed that she had undergone an emergency appendectomy, calling it the most terrifying experience of her life.

“At the beginning of the year, I faced the biggest fright of my life,” Pollock shared on social media. “Three months into my pregnancy, I was rushed to the hospital to have my appendix removed. Against all odds, both my baby and I made it through safely. Life is too short to be anything but grateful.”

Love story spanning over a decade

The couple's journey together began in 2012 when Pollock, then managing



Senegalese-American singer Akon, crossed paths with Wizkid.

Their professional relationship evolved into a deep friendship and later a romantic partnership. In 2017, they welcomed their first child, Zion Ayo-Balogun, marking a new chapter in their lives. Five years later, in October 2022, Pollock announced the birth of their second child.

Pollock's dual role as manager and mother

Pollock, 41, is celebrated not just as Wizkid's manager but as a pivotal figure in his career. She has played a key role in shaping his global success.

Her ability to balance her demanding role as a talent manager and her responsibilities as a mother continues to inspire many.

Wizkid: A global afrobeat icon

Wizkid, 34, remains one of the most influential figures in Afrobeat music, with numerous accolades and international hits to his name.

Often crediting his family as a source of

strength and motivation, Wizkid has continued to dominate the global music scene, breaking records and expanding the reach of Afrobeat.

An outpouring of love from fans
Fans worldwide have flooded social media with congratulatory messages and well wishes for the couple. Despite the challenges they faced during this pregnancy, the couple's story serves as a reminder of resilience and gratitude.

New chapter for their family

The arrival of their third child adds a new chapter to their growing family. For Wizkid and Pollock, this moment is not just a celebration of life but also a reflection of their resilience and gratitude for overcoming challenges together.

Fans eagerly await further updates as the couple embraces this new phase of parenthood.

Seun Kuti: Don't involve me in Burna Boy, Speed Darlington's drama

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Afrobeat singer Seun Kuti has openly declared his neutrality in the ongoing feud between music stars Burna Boy and Speed Darlington.

Speaking during an Instagram live session, Kuti made it clear that he would not involve himself in the controversy. Despite being connected to both artists, he emphasized that he has no intention of taking sides.

Kuti, known for his outspoken nature and deep ties to the Afrobeat genre, addressed speculation surrounding his relationship with Burna Boy.

Recently, Burna Boy gifted Kuti a piece of diamond jewelry, sparking rumors that the two shared a close advisory bond. However, Kuti swiftly dispelled those claims.

“Receiving a gift doesn't mean I'm anyone's adviser,” Kuti explained during the live session. “I don't want to be dragged into this issue between Burna Boy and Speed Darlington.”

Kuti's neutral stance

The musician took the opportunity to underline his impartiality. He stressed that his connection to Burna Boy through the diamond gift should not be misinterpreted as an endorsement or support for Burna Boy in the feud.

Kuti's statement came amid heated exchanges between Burna Boy and Speed Darlington, which have drawn widespread attention on social media.

Kuti also used his platform to highlight a layer of irony in Speed Darlington's accusations against Burna Boy. He reminded fans of how Speed Darlington's rise to fame was influenced by the very person who is now part of the controversy — American music mogul Diddy.

The role of Diddy in the controversy
As Kuti explained, Diddy played a crucial role in amplifying Speed

Darlington's music. “It was Diddy who reposted Speed Darlington's song ‘Bangdadang,’ making it popular.

Meanwhile, I've done countless songs, but Diddy never posted any of mine,” Kuti remarked.

The reference to Diddy highlighted an unexpected twist in the drama. While Speed Darlington has targeted Burna Boy with his claims, Kuti pointed out that Diddy's earlier support significantly contributed to Speed Darlington's career trajectory. This observation added a layer of perspective to the ongoing feud.

Seun Kuti: Don't involve me in Burna Boy, Speed Darlington's drama. [Photo Credit: Google]

Seun Kuti: Don't involve me in Burna Boy, Speed Darlington's drama. [Photo Credit: Google]

Refusing to take sides

Despite his observations, Kuti maintained his neutral stance. “Don't involve me in Burna Boy and Speed Darlington's case,” he stated firmly.

By refusing to pick sides, Kuti has positioned himself as a voice of reason, urging others to avoid unnecessary entanglement in the feud.

His statements have resonated with many fans who appreciate his decision to stay out of the fray. Social media reactions suggest that some followers view Kuti's approach as a mature and balanced response to the situation.



Broader message

Seun Kuti's remarks go beyond the specifics of the Burna Boy and Speed Darlington feud. His words underscore the importance of staying true to one's principles and avoiding unnecessary conflicts.

Kuti's stance serves as a reminder that not every connection or gift should be interpreted as a sign of allegiance.

By focusing on his own artistry and maintaining his independence, Kuti sets an example for others in the music industry. His ability to address controversy with clarity and fairness has further cemented his reputation as a respected figure in Afrobeat.

Looking ahead

As the Burna Boy and Speed Darlington drama continues to unfold, Kuti's decision to step away from the conflict sets a clear boundary.

Toyin Abraham's "Alakada" ranks 5th in 2024

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Renowned actress and producer Toyin Abraham Ajeje celebrates a major milestone in her thriving career, marking a significant achievement in Nollywood.

Her latest film, *Alakada: Bad and Boujee*, has climbed to an impressive fifth place on the list of 2024's highest-grossing movies. The film has raked in over ₦200 million at the box office, achieving this milestone in just 11 days.

This remarkable accomplishment highlights Toyin Abraham's growing influence in Nollywood, solidifying her position as one of the industry's most successful figures.

Her fans, affectionately called "Toyin Titans," played a significant role in the film's success, a fact she did not hesitate to acknowledge in her celebratory post on social media.

In her heartfelt message, Toyin expressed immense gratitude to her supporters for their unwavering dedication. "Thank you, 2024! And thank you, Toyin Titans, for making *Alakada: Bad and Boujee* the 5th highest-grossing movie of 2024 in just 11 days. I mean, in just 11 DAYS! What an incredible milestone for me!" she wrote.

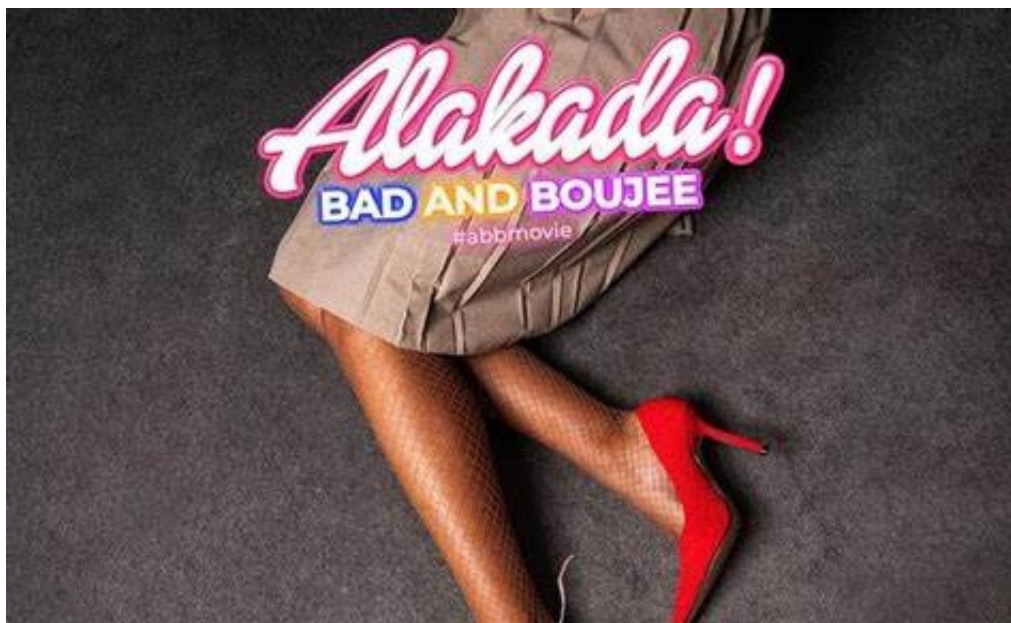
Record-breaking year

Toyin Abraham's success with *Alakada: Bad and Boujee* is a testament to her determination and vision.

The actress has made it clear that 2024 was a year of pushing boundaries and achieving new milestones.

By focusing on breaking records and aiming for excellence, she has set a new standard for herself and others in the industry.

Her latest film continues to draw audiences to cinemas, proving that its appeal shows no signs of slowing down.



The movie's success comes as a refreshing reminder of the power of perseverance, hard work, and an unshakable bond between a star and her fanbase.

Eyes on a bigger future

While Toyin is reveling in her current success, she has already turned her attention to the future. In her post, she made it clear that she has no plans to rest on her laurels. Instead, she is gearing up for an even bigger and more successful 2025.

"We're not stopping there," she declared. "We're heading into 2025 stronger than ever, ready to set even bigger records! *Alakada* is still lighting up cinemas. This year, we're focused on breaking records and reaching new heights to inspire others."

No time for distractions

As Toyin charts her path forward, she emphasized the importance of staying focused. She spoke about avoiding distractions and ignoring trivial matters that could derail her progress. "No time for small things, small-minded conversations, or distractions. It's all about growth, success, and making history! Let's keep shining!"

These words reflect a clear vision of what she wants to achieve. Her determination to stay on track and inspire others has become a hallmark of her career.

The success of *Alakada: Bad and*

Boujee is more than just a personal victory for Toyin Abraham. It also underscores the growing global appeal of Nollywood films.

As Nigerian cinema continues to gain international recognition, stars like Toyin are paving the way for the industry to reach new audiences and achieve unprecedented success.

Toyin Abraham's journey from actress to celebrated producer is a source of inspiration for aspiring creatives.

Her story proves that with hard work, resilience, and a loyal support system, it is possible to reach the top and stay there.

Final words

As *Alakada: Bad and Boujee* continues its impressive run, Toyin Abraham remains an embodiment of Nollywood's evolving success story.

With her sights firmly set on the future, fans and industry insiders alike are eager to see what new heights she will reach in 2025.

For Toyin and her supporters, this is just the beginning of an even brighter chapter in her career.

Kemi Adetiba set to release 'King Of Boys 3'

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Director Kemi Adetiba has thrilled fans with the announcement of King of Boys 3, the eagerly awaited third installment of her acclaimed and beloved hit series.

This new chapter, subtitled The Beginning of the End, is set to premiere in December 2025. Adetiba revealed the exciting news on her Instagram page, coinciding with her birthday celebration.

In her post, the celebrated filmmaker addressed the series' loyal fan base, known as the "KOB Army." She wrote, "KOB Army... ARISE!!! It's time... We move. Signed: Your General. #KOB3 #TheBeginningOfTheEnd #DettyDecember25 #KAV25." The announcement has sparked widespread excitement and anticipation among fans of the franchise.

Journey of power and intrigue

The King of Boys series tells the riveting story of Alhaja Eniola Salami, a powerful businesswoman and philanthropist with political ambitions. Played masterfully by the award-winning Sola Sobowale, Salami's character has become one of the most memorable figures in contemporary Nigerian cinema.

The first film, released in 2018, was a massive success, earning praise for its compelling storytelling and standout performances. The sequel, King of Boys: The Return of the King, premiered on Netflix in 2021 and broke new ground as a seven-part miniseries. Both installments showcased Adetiba's ability to blend gripping narratives with vivid character development.

What to expect in "The beginning of the end"

The upcoming film promises to be another thrilling addition to the



franchise. Adetiba has hinted at the introduction of new characters alongside the return of familiar faces. Fans can look forward to stellar performances from an ensemble cast, including celebrated actors Nse Ikpe-Etim, Jide Kosoko, Adesua Etomi, and Richard Mofe-Damijo.

While plot details remain under wraps, the subtitle The Beginning of the End suggests that the stakes will be higher than ever. The series has consistently explored themes of power, loyalty, betrayal, and ambition, and viewers can expect these elements to take center stage once again.

King Of Boy by Kemi Adetiba
King Of Boy by Kemi Adetiba
Legacy of excellence

Kemi Adetiba has solidified her place as one of Nigeria's most influential filmmakers. Known for her meticulous attention to detail and innovative storytelling, Adetiba has turned King of Boys into a cultural phenomenon. Her ability to capture complex characters and weave them into dynamic narratives has earned her a loyal following.

The announcement of King of Boys 3 has only heightened the buzz surrounding Adetiba's work. Fans have taken to social media to express their excitement, sharing their hopes and predictions for the new film.

Mark your calendars

As the December 2025 premiere date approaches, anticipation continues to build. The return of King of Boys promises to deliver the intense drama, sharp dialogue, and unforgettable moments that have defined the series.

Whether you're a longtime fan or new to the franchise, this is one cinematic event you won't want to miss.

Stay tuned for updates as more details about King of Boys 3: The Beginning of the End emerge. Until then, the countdown to "Detty December" has officially begun!

Burnham breaks ranks with Starmer to back grooming gang inquiry

By New Daily Prime

Andy Burnham has defied Sir Keir Starmer to call for a national inquiry into grooming gangs.

The Labour Mayor of Greater Manchester said he believed there was a case for a “limited national inquiry” drawing on local reviews into historical child sexual exploitation.

Sir Keir ordered Labour MPs to vote to block a national inquiry into grooming gangs on Wednesday evening.

The Prime Minister did not take part in the vote and his spokesman said he would be “guided by the victims” on the issue, but Downing Street denied that this meant Sir Keir was wavering in his belief that a new inquiry was unnecessary.

It comes as Reform UK, which has led the calls for a national inquiry, came joint top of a national opinion poll for the first time.

A new survey by Find Out Now put the party on 25 per cent of the vote, joint top with Labour and five points ahead of the Conservatives.

Labour said that it blocked the Tory amendment backing a new inquiry because it would have derailed the entire Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill.

‘Case for a limited national inquiry’ Mr Burnham told BBC Radio Manchester on Thursday: “In my view, the Government was right to reject that form of opportunism. But I did hear last night coming out of the debate, ministers saying they are open to discussing issues now with survivors.

“And I will add my voice into this and say I do think there is the case for a limited national inquiry that draws on reviews like the one that I commissioned and the one we’ve seen in Rotherham, the one we’ve seen in Telford, to draw out some of these national issues, and compel people to give evidence who then may



have charges to answer and be held to account. That is something I couldn’t do at my level.”

Mr Burnham commissioned an independent review in 2017 to consider allegations made in a BBC documentary. It looked at grooming in Manchester, Oldham and Rochdale and concluded that authorities failed to protect children. Neil O’Brien, a shadow education minister, said that Mr Burnham’s intervention showed that the Government’s line on a fresh inquiry was “crumbling”.

Khalid Mahmood, a former Labour MP for Birmingham Perry Barr, has also backed the calls.

He said: “What the Prime Minister is doing is looking at the wider issue of the inquiry which is already taking place, but I think we need to look at this from a different angle, which is looking at the lives of people who have suffered – and they need to be given closure on this. Also, if there are any people left in these gangs, we need to ensure that we get them

and that there is no continuation of this cruel, barbaric activity.”

Also on Thursday, a survivor of a grooming gang called on the Government to launch a national inquiry into the scandal.

The 38-year-old, who wrote a book about her ordeal under the pen name Gaia Cooper, demanded action in an exclusive interview with The Telegraph’s Daily T podcast

There is mounting pressure on the Government over grooming gangs, with attention thrown back on the issue by Elon Musk. The US tech billionaire and key ally of Donald Trump has repeatedly posted on his social media site X criticising Sir Keir over the issue.

On Thursday, reports emerged that Mr Musk had even discussed with allies how the Prime Minister could be removed from office before the next general election.

Starmer: Labour has deported record number of migrants by scrapping Rwanda scheme

By New Daily Prime

Home Office says it has returned more than 16,400 illegal migrants and foreign criminals since election

Sir Keir Starmer has claimed Labour has deported a record number of foreign criminals and illegal migrants by scrapping the Rwanda scheme.

On Thursday, the Home Office said it had returned more than 16,400 illegal migrants and foreign criminals since the election – the highest six-month total since 2018.

Yvette Cooper, the Home Secretary, set the target of overtaking 2018's total after Labour ditched the Tories' Rwanda deportation scheme and switched hundreds of immigration staff to work on returning illegal migrants to their home countries.

Sir Keir suggested quick returns provided a deterrent to replace the "wasteful" Rwanda scheme, saying: "For the individuals that are being smuggled, the disincentive is you're wasting your money and if you get to the UK you're going to be returned to where you came from.

"I'm really pleased that the figures for the last six months show record numbers of people being returned – 16,400 people who should not be in the UK.

"It's the highest number now for six or seven years, because this Government has prioritised making sure that we are returning people who shouldn't be here, not wasting our time on things like the Rwanda scheme, which wasn't working."

Inflatable dinghies and outboard engines believed to have been used by migrants crossing the English Channel are stored in Dover Credit:



Henry Nicholls/AFP

The Home Office data showed the number of enforced returns of illegal migrants was up 24 per cent on the same period last year and the 2,580 foreign criminals deported was up 23 per cent on 2023.

It included four of the biggest removal flights, carrying more than 800 illegal migrants and foreign offenders.

However, the Tories claimed Sir Keir was being "deeply dishonest" as the Government was only returning a "tiny" five per cent of the migrants who had arrived since it came to office.

Chris Philp, the shadow home secretary, said Labour was instead allowing thousands of Channel migrants to claim asylum and remain in the UK.

"Letting 95 per cent of people who cross by small boat stay in the UK is not a deterrent," he said. "The Government is being deeply dishonest by claiming returns that mainly have nothing to do with small boat arrivals will act as a deterrent. The Rwanda scheme would have been a real deterrent, but Labour cancelled it before it even started."

It comes after the Government announced that people-smugglers would

be subject to financial sanctions like Russian oligarchs, terrorists and cyber-criminals. Suspected traffickers would be sanctioned by name, enabling UK investigators to freeze their assets in Britain and those of any individual or business supplying them with equipment or helping them financially

There are still some 12,000 foreign offenders in the UK who have been released from jail into the community and are liable for deportation. On Wednesday, the Telegraph revealed foreign offenders freed from prison in the UK were going on crime sprees after avoiding deportation.

Hundreds of foreign criminals freed from jail in the past four years have committed multiple offences after avoiding deportation or challenging their removal under the European Convention on Human Rights.

Meanwhile, David Lammy, the Foreign Secretary, said on Thursday that Shamima Begum would not be returning to the UK following calls from Donald Trump's incoming counter-terrorism chief for the repatriation of British members of Islamic State being held in Syrian prison camps.

US pledges \$500m weapons for Ukraine to fight Russia

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The US will send half a billion dollars in military aid to Ukraine ahead of US president-elect, Donald Trump's return to the White House, the country's top diplomat has announced.

Speaking during the 25th and possibly final meeting of Ukraine's western backers at the Ramstein air base in Germany, US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken said Washington would supply one more trove of military support.

The \$500m (£406m) package includes air defence missiles, air-to-ground munitions and support equipment for F-16 fighter jets. The US has sent roughly £50 billion in military aid to Ukraine since the full-scale invasion nearly three years ago. The announcement, however, suggests that the remaining \$3.8bn of the funds set aside for Ukraine by the Joe Biden administration will remain unused ahead of Mr Trump's return, despite previous commitments to use all the money.



Meanwhile, Russia launched dozens of glide bombs across Ukraine over the last 24 hours, Ukraine's military reported in its latest update, as the casualty toll from an attack on civilian-populated Zaporizhzhia reached 126.

The Ukrainian general staff said Russia had launched 62 glide bomb attacks on Wednesday. The munitions, nicknamed "building-destroyers," can carry warheads weighing up to 3 tonnes and blow holes deeper than bomb shelters.

Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy and US Defence Secretary, Lloyd Austin used their final meeting in Germany to press the incoming Trump administration to not give up on Kyiv's fight, warning that to cease military support now "will only invite more aggression, chaos and war."

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19 dead in attack on Chad's Presidential Palace

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

An attack on Chad's presidential palace left 18 assailants dead and six in custody, with one soldier killed and three wounded, state media reported Thursday.

The attack on Wednesday night occurred while Chadian President Mahamat Deby itno was inside the palace, but authorities said the situation was quickly brought under control.

"The situation is completely under control. There is no fear," Foreign Affairs Minister Abderaman Koulamallah said while surrounded by soldiers in a live Facebook broadcast filmed inside what appeared to be a quiet presidential

palace late Wednesday.

In an interview with state TV, Koulamallah praised the vigilance of the palace guards, describing the attackers as disorganized and intoxicated by alcohol and drugs. When asked if the attack was terrorism, he said it was probably not, as the attackers were local youths from the capital, N'Djamena.

The attack occurred the same day as a visit by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who congratulated Deby Itno on reestablishing constitutional order.

In the immediate aftermath, rumors spread online that the attack was the work



of Islamic militant group Boko Haram.

Boko Haram, which launched an insurgency more than a decade ago against Western education, seeks to establish Islamic law in Nigeria's northeast. The insurgency has spread to neighboring West African countries including Cameroon,

China detects 5 new cases of mpox strain

By Oluwatosin Ologun



China's Center For Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said on Thursday that it has detected the new mutated pox, mpox, strain clade Ib as the viral infection spreads to more countries.

This is coming after the World Health Organization, WHO, declared pox a global public health emergency last year.

WHO maintains that Mpox spreads through close contact and causes flu-like symptoms and pus-filled lesions on the body. Although usually mild, it can be fatal in rare cases.

Reportedly, the outbreak in DRC began with the spread of an endemic strain, known as clade I. But the clade Ib variant appears to spread more easily through routine close contact, including sexual contact.

The variant has spread from DRC to neighbouring countries, including Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda, triggering the emergency declaration from the WHO.

In August last year, China said it would monitor people and goods entering the country for mpox. The country's National Health

Commission said mpox would be managed as a Category B infectious disease, enabling officials to take emergency measures such as restricting gatherings, suspending work and school, and sealing off areas when there is an outbreak of a disease.

However, Chinese health authorities reported that it had found a cluster outbreak of the Ib subclade that started with the infection of a foreigner who has a history of travel and residence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In its latest report, the China CDC said that human metapneumovirus (hMPV), a common respiratory infection, remains at high levels.

Flu activity across the country is expected to gradually decline in mid-to-late January, the report said.

monkey pox

The patients' symptoms are mild, including rashes and blisters, the CDC said. The patients and others who are at risk of infection are receiving medical treatment or are under observation.

The new strain has been spreading across several African countries, affecting mainly children and adolescents. Infections have spilled over from Africa

to other continents, including Europe and North America.

The US reported its first case of clade I mpox in November, but reassured the public the risk remained "very low". In Asia, the variant has also been detected in countries like Thailand and India.

Unlike an earlier milder strain that erupted in 2022 and spread primarily through men who have sex with men, the current variant is spreading through all kinds of sexual activity and other close physical contact.

Asian countries from China to Indian and Pakistan — many of which are densely populated — have beefed up surveillance of infections. Travelers from affected countries were being asked to self-report symptoms and hospitals were on alert for suspected cases.

After the WHO raised the alert levels on mpox, China has begun asking travelers from affected regions, those who have been in contact with mpox patients or individuals experiencing symptoms to self-report to customs officials upon entry, where they may undergo testing.

Emirates FA Cup fourth-round draw set for Jan 12

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye



The eagerly awaited Emirates FA Cup fourth-round draw is scheduled to take place on Sunday, January 12, 2025, following the highly anticipated match between Arsenal and Manchester United at the Emirates Stadium.

The match, which kicks off at 3pm GMT, will determine the timing of the draw, with the fourth-round selection expected to begin around 5pm GMT—unless the game goes to extra time. If additional play is needed, the draw will still occur immediately after the conclusion of the match, as confirmed in a statement on the FA's official website.

The draw will be presented by Kelly Somers and conducted by football legends Martin Keown and Mark Schwarzer. It will be broadcast live on BBC One as part of the network's FA Cup coverage, and will also be available across the FA's official social media channels.

The statement from the FA further noted that the draw is a key moment in the tournament, with 32 teams progressing to the fourth round from the 64 that entered. Video Assistant Referee (VAR) will be introduced for the fifth-round matches, which will be contested by the 32 victorious teams.

As the FA Cup tournament continues, the ball numbers for the fourth-round draw are as follows:

Southampton or Swansea City
 Arsenal or Manchester United
 Exeter City or Oxford United
 Leyton Orient or Derby County
 Reading or Burnley
 Aston Villa or West Ham United
 Norwich City or Brighton & Hove Albion
 Manchester City or Salford City
 Millwall or Dagenham & Redbridge
 Liverpool or Accrington Stanley
 Bristol City or Wolverhampton Wanderers
 Preston North End or Charlton

Athletic
 Chelsea or Morecambe
 Middlesbrough or Blackburn Rovers
 AFC Bournemouth or West Bromwich Albion
 Mansfield Town or Wigan Athletic
 Tamworth or Tottenham Hotspur
 Hull City or Doncaster Rovers
 Sunderland or Stoke City
 Leicester City or Queens Park Rangers
 Brentford or Plymouth Argyle
 Coventry City or Sheffield Wednesday
 Newcastle United or Bromley
 Everton or Peterborough United
 Wycombe Wanderers or Portsmouth
 Birmingham City or Lincoln City
 Leeds United or Harrogate Town
 Nottingham Forest or Luton Town
 Sheffield United or Cardiff City
 Ipswich Town or Bristol Rovers
 Fulham or Watford
 Crystal Palace or Stockport County
 The excitement continues to build as clubs vie for a spot in the next round, with the draw set to be a thrilling moment for teams and fans alike.

Wolves sign Reims defender Emmanuel Agbadou for £16.6m By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Wolverhampton Wanderers have secured the signing of defender Emmanuel Agbadou from French club Reims in a £16.6m deal.

The 27-year-old Ivory Coast international has agreed to a four-and-a-half-year contract at Molineux, with an option to extend for an additional year. Agbadou is the first signing under new head coach Vitor Pereira and signals the club's intent to strengthen their squad amid a relegation battle.

Sporting director Matt Hobbs praised Agbadou's tenacity, saying, "Emmanuel's a winner and unbelievably hungry. Wolves fans will love him because he gives absolutely everything."

The move concludes Wolves' pursuit of Lens defender Kevin Danso as they prioritized Agbadou to bolster their backline after losing captain Max Kilman to West Ham in the summer and Yerson Mosquera to a season-ending injury.



Agbadou brings experience from his time in Ligue 1, where he made 76 appearances and scored three goals for Reims. His arrival is timely for Wolves, who have conceded a league-high 45 goals this season and sit just above the relegation zone on goal

difference.

Wolves face Bristol City in the FA Cup on Saturday before returning to Premier League action against Newcastle on 15 January.

Barcelona's Olmo and Victor granted temporary playing permission By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Barcelona forwards Dani Olmo and Pau Victor have been granted provisional permission to play after an appeal to Spain's national sports council (CSD).

Both players, signed last summer, were initially registered for the first half of the season as Barcelona struggled to comply with La Liga's wage cap. A subsequent request to renew their registrations was rejected by La Liga and the Spanish Football Federation (RFEF).

On Wednesday, the CSD overruled these decisions, allowing the players to compete while a final ruling on Barcelona's appeal is pending.

The CSD stated this precautionary measure "suspends the cancellation" of their licenses and upholds their validity until the appeal is resolved.

The decision came too late for Olmo and

Victor to feature in Barcelona's 2-0 Spanish Supercopa semi-final win over Athletic Club but permits them to play in Sunday's final against Real Madrid or Mallorca.

Olmo, a £51m summer signing from RB Leipzig, was influential in Spain's Euro 2024 win. Barcelona's financial difficulties initially limited their ability to meet La Liga's financial fair play rules, delaying the renewal of his and Victor's licenses.

Barcelona reportedly raised €100m (£83.42m) by selling VIP boxes in their under-construction stadium but missed La Liga's deadline to submit the paperwork.

La Liga expressed disagreement with the CSD decision, citing a lack of opportunity to respond to Barcelona's



appeal. The league is considering further legal action.

The ruling provides a temporary boost for Barcelona, who continue to navigate financial challenges while competing at the highest level.

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Graham Potter: The right fit for West Ham?

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

West Ham United have turned a new chapter, appointing Graham Potter as their head coach on a two-and-a-half-year contract. Potter, who has been out of management since leaving Chelsea in April 2023, arrives with a mixed reputation—heralded for his transformative stint at Brighton but shadowed by his challenging experience at Chelsea. Now, the question looms: is he the right man to steer the Hammers toward sustained success?

A Thoughtful and Adaptive Manager

Potter's journey in football management is as unconventional as it is impressive. Rising through the ranks with Östersunds FK in Sweden, he achieved three promotions and a memorable Europa League run, including a win at Arsenal. His tactical fluidity and player-first approach earned him a move to Brighton, where he reshaped the Seagulls from perennial relegation candidates to a team capable of playing adventurous football.

Former Brighton forward Glenn Murray praised Potter's meticulous planning and collective management style, describing him as a "thought-provoking" leader capable of adapting tactics mid-game. Yet, his humility shines through. "It's hard to be a sexy name when you're called Potter," he once joked.

Lessons from Chelsea

Potter's tenure at Chelsea was turbulent. Despite high expectations, his seven months in charge saw the team flounder, leaving the Blues in 11th place at the time of his dismissal. Reflecting on the experience, Potter admitted the instability caused by Chelsea's extensive squad overhaul and rapid changes made the job particularly challenging.

"It was an overload situation," he confessed. "Maybe I joined too quickly,



but I believed in the project." The experience left Potter determined to choose his next role more carefully—a resolve that has led him to West Ham.

Why West Ham?

West Ham offers a mix of opportunity and risk. The club sits 14th in the Premier League, seven points above the relegation zone, but boasts a stable ownership structure and a history of allowing managers time to build. The squad, while not without its flaws, has potential to compete higher up the table. The club's recent silverware—the 2022-23 Europa Conference League trophy—indicates an appetite for success.

For Potter, this is a chance to reestablish himself in a club that shares his ambitions. West Ham fans, however, remain divided. Some doubt

whether Potter's success at Brighton can be replicated without the recruitment genius of Tony Bloom and Dan Ashworth, while others see the potential for him to deliver "the West Ham way"—entertaining, progressive football.

The Ceiling for Potter and West Ham Potter's immediate challenge will be avoiding relegation, but his long-term goals must align with the fans' European aspirations. With the January transfer window open, Potter faces the dual task of strengthening the squad and implementing his style of play.

West Ham's technical director Tim Steidten's role in recruitment could also test Potter's ability to integrate new talent. The fallout between Steidten and former manager David Moyes adds an extra layer of complexity, with Potter needing to navigate these dynamics carefully.

Manchester City eye Omar as backup for Haaland

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye



Manchester City is reportedly exploring a move to sign Egyptian forward Omar Marmoush from Eintracht Frankfurt, as a potential backup for Erling Haaland, whose goal-scoring form this season has yet to match his prolific performance from the previous campaign.

According to a report from Sky Sports on Thursday, the Bundesliga club is asking for around £67m (€80m) for the 25-year-old forward. However, negotiations between Manchester City and Eintracht Frankfurt have not yet taken place.

Sky Sports also highlighted that Marmoush does not have a release clause in his contract, meaning that offers below the £67m asking price would likely be rejected by Frankfurt, who are currently third in the German top flight.

Despite the high asking price, reports suggest that Manchester City and Marmoush's representatives consider a more realistic transfer fee to be between £42m and £50m (€50m-€60m).

Marmoush, who is capable of playing across the front three, has been in scintillating form this season, scoring 13 goals in the Bundesliga, placing him behind only Bayern Munich's Harry Kane in the league's scoring chart.

Across all competitions, Marmoush has netted 18 goals and is second only to Liverpool's Mohamed Salah for goal involvements among players in the top five European leagues this season.

In other transfer news, Manchester

City has also reportedly made initial contact with Palmeiras regarding an 18-year-old Brazilian centre-back, Vitor Reis. Discussions are said to be in the early stages, with Palmeiras hoping to secure a fee in the region of £33.5m to £40m for the highly-rated defender.

Reis made 22 appearances for Palmeiras last season, scoring two goals, and captained Brazil's U17 team at the 2023 U17 World Cup.

Manchester City's interest in both Marmoush and Reis reflects their proactive approach to strengthening their squad for the remainder of the season.

West Ham United appoint Graham Potter as Head Coach

By Oluwatosin Ologun

West Ham United is delighted to welcome former Chelsea boss, Graham Potter as the Club's new Head Coach to replace Julen Lopetegui following a disappointing start to the Premier League season.

The 49-year-old joins the Hammers on a two-and-a-half year contract and will take charge of his new team for the first time when the Irons travel to Aston Villa in the FA Cup third round on Friday evening.

A highly-respected and sought-after coach, Potter has been awaiting the right opportunity after leaving his last role at Chelsea in April 2023, and was the Board's unanimous choice to take the Club forward in line with its objectives and ambitions.

Potter, whose progressive style and flexible tactical approach previously impressed at Swedish club Östersund, Swansea City and Brighton & Hove Albion, has a passion to return to Premier League management and is relishing the opportunity to work with West Ham United's talented squad of international players.

West Ham United is a guge club with great support

While accepting the appointment, Potter regarded his new club as a huge Club, at the heart of London, with a tremendous fanbase and great support all around the world

The new Head Coach said: "I am delighted to be here. It was important to me that I waited until a job came along that I felt was right for me, and equally that I was the right fit for the Club I am joining. That is the feeling I have with West Ham United.

"My conversations with the Chairman and the Board have been very positive and constructive, we share the same values of



hard work and high energy to create the solid foundations that can produce success, and we are on the same wavelength in terms of what is needed in the short-term and then how we want to move the Club forward in the medium to long term.

"West Ham United is a huge Club, at the heart of London, with a tremendous fanbase and great support all around the world. I saw the scenes that followed their Europa Conference League victory in 2023 and it was clear that this is a Club with everything in place to become consistently successful, both on and off the pitch.

"The Club have made a lot of good progress in recent years and ensured there are some very strong foundations in place to build on. You don't win a European trophy by fluke – there has to be a good bedrock at a football club for that to happen, and the challenge now is to take that on and build the next steps, to develop a team and a Club that the supporters can be proud of."

Graham Potter signing at London

Stadium

Potter will be joined at the Hammers by Bruno (Assistant Coach), Billy Reid (First-Team Coach) and Narcís Pèlach (First-Team Coach). Goalkeeper Coach Xavi Valero will stay on in his role.

Potter has long been considered one of the brightest coaching minds in the English game, having studied for a Master's degree following a 14-year playing career with the likes of Birmingham City, Southampton, West Bromwich Albion and Stoke City.

The Solihull-born Potter began his coaching career with university students before taking his first managerial role at Östersund in 2010. He led the Swedish club on an incredible run of three promotions in five seasons to the top-flight, won the Swedish Cup and reached the knockout stages of the UEFA Europa League, defeating Arsenal at Emirates Stadium.

Potter's exploits in Scandinavia prompted Swansea to appoint him in summer 2018. After an eye-catching year in South Wales, he took charge at Brighton a year later and led the Seagulls to a then record-high Premier League finish of ninth in 2020/21.