Alleged $1bn fraud: Court to rule on bail application of detained CBEX operators June 30

Justice Emeka Nwite of the Federal High Court, Abuja, has adjourned ruling on the bail application filed by three detained promoters of Crypto Bridge Exchange (CBEX) in connection with an alleged fraud of over one billion dollars.

The ruling is now scheduled for June 30.

The judge fixed the date after the adoption of arguments for and against the application by counsel for the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Fadila Yusuf, and the defence lawyers.

On April 24, Justice Nwite had granted the EFCC permission to arrest and detain six CBEX operators over their alleged involvement in the fraud.

The order followed an ex-parte motion filed by the EFCC, seeking time to complete its investigation and possibly initiate prosecution.

The six suspects are Adefowora Abiodun Olanipekun, Adefowora Oluwanisola, Emmanuel Uko, Seyi Oloyede, Avwerosuo Otorudo, and Chukwuebuka Ehirim — listed as the 1st to 6th defendants respectively.

In the motion dated and filed on April 23, the EFCC outlined four grounds justifying its request. Yusuf stated that the Commission had a statutory responsibility to detect and prevent financial crimes through investigation.

She noted that the suspects were initially at large and that a warrant of arrest was necessary for proper investigation and prosecution.

Abiodun (1st defendant), Otorudo (5th defendant), and Ehirim (6th defendant) have since been in the EFCC's custody.

At the resumed hearing, Babatunde Busari appeared for Abiodun, while Justice Otorudo represented Otorudo and Ehirim. Both lawyers informed the court that they had filed bail applications on behalf of their clients.

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...that the people may know

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Nigerian teen artiste dies after alleged beating in Ghana

—Pg 2

Nigeria drifting into dual leadership —Dele Momodu

Prominent media figure and former presidential aspirant, Dele Momodu has sharply criticised the growing influence of FCT Minister, Nyesom Wike, warning that his unchecked political rise under President Bola Tinubu's administration risks creating a de facto dual leadership at the federal level.

Speaking during an appearance on Channels Television's 'The Morning Brief' on Wednesday, Momodu expressed deep concern over Wike's growing authority, which he likened to wielding powers comparable to the presidency.

"Right now, it's looking like we have two presidents in Nigeria. Wike can do anything," he said.

According to Momodu, not even Tinubu during his reign over Lagos State since 1999 showed the level of political audacity now associated with Wike.

His remarks followed Tuesday's commissioning of the newly refurbished International Conference Centre in Abuja, which was renamed in honour of President Tinubu.

At the event, Tinubu had publicly praised Wike and urged him to ignore "busybodies and naysayers."

The president's words, however, drew rebuke from Momodu, who criticised the use of such language to describe citizens.

"You interpreted it as 'naysayers'—'naysayers' is still far better. Who is a bystander in his own country because of one man?" he asked.

Describing the ceremony, Momodu noted the visibly confused expressions of attendees as Wike danced exuberantly.

He attributed Wike's celebration to the alleged ₦30 billion cost of the project, which he suggested was excessive. "If you were in Wike's shoes, you would dance more than he danced yesterday (Tuesday)," he said wryly.

The PDP chieftain went further to allege that Wike's conduct is not isolated but enabled by powerful backers within the APC-led federal government.

Drawing parallels with Wike's controversial tenure as governor of Rivers State, Momodu accused the minister of perpetuating similar strongman tactics now with federal backing.

"A major crisis of monumental dimension was orchestrated in Rivers by one man," he said, recalling how the situation escalated to a near state of emergency.

The comments come amid deepening disarray within the main opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), where defections to the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) have intensified.

Wike, still officially a PDP member, had openly backed Tinubu's 2023 presidential campaign and was subsequently rewarded with a ministerial appointment in the APC government.

Momodu expressed a particular dismay at Wike's recent push for the PDP to zone its 2027 presidential ticket to the South, questioning his authority to interfere in party affairs.

"Who is Wike to dictate

CONTINUES ON PG 2»

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTRE:
L-R: President's Chief of Staff, Femi Gbajabiamila; Senate President Godswill Akpabio; FCT Minister, Nyesom Wike; President Bola Ahmed Tinubu; and FCT Minister of State, Mariya Mahmoud at the commissioning of the International Conference Centre in Abuja on Tuesday, June 10, 2025.

Rivers 2025 budget anticipates Fubara's return —Ibas

The Sole Administrator of Rivers State, Vice Admiral Ibok-Ete Ibas (retd), has said that the proposed ₦1.48tn 2025 budget anticipates the return of suspended Governor Siminalayi Fubara and other affected political office holders.

Ibas disclosed this on Wednesday in Abuja while defending the budget before the House of Representatives Ad-Hoc Committee on Rivers State Oversight.

He explained that the proposed budget is aligned with the strategic objectives of the Rivers State Development Plan 2017–2027, presenting an integrated framework aimed at boosting revenue, accelerating infrastructure development, strengthening human capital, and promoting inclusive economic growth.

"In anticipation of a return to constitutional order, the draft budget prudently retains provisions for the offices and functions of suspended political actors, some of whom have already accessed allocated resources in the first quarter and are expected to resume duties once the emergency period ends," Ibas stated.

However, he lamented that some officials had failed to provide essential information required for the preparation of a more comprehensive budget proposal.

"Regrettably, some state officials withheld critical data necessary to ensure complete documentation of expenditures at the time the estimates were submitted," he said.

"Nonetheless, given the exigencies under the state of emergency and the importance of fiscal credibility, the budget framework incorporates available expenditure data prior to its submission, thereby regularising first-quarter spending within a lawful and transparent structure.

This ensures consistency with

CONTINUES ON PG 2»

Indian, others arraigned over alleged diversion of ₦4bn diesel
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Stakeholders advocate reserved legislative seats for women
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Grassroots Youth Football Development League Super 4 set for June 14–15
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Elon Musk says he regrets some posts about Donald Trump
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Indian, others arraigned over alleged diversion of ₦4bn diesel

An Indian citizen, Tukur Shamsudden, alongside 12 others, was on Tuesday arraigned before the Federal High Court in Lagos by operatives of the Police Special Fraud Unit, Ikoyi, for alleged conspiracy and unlawful diversion of Automotive Gas Oil (diesel) valued at over ₦4 billion, the property of Dangote Industries Limited.

The defendants were arraigned before Justice Deinde Dipeolu and include Ikechukwu Obi, Chigozie Osukwu, Ukaegbu Chukwuma, Umeh Ugochukwu, Emmanuella Akamadu, Zango Umar, Emmanuel Oku, Shaibu Michael, Lucky Otoide, Mmaduabuchi Okezuonu, Ephraim Kanakapudi, and Omojowo Emmanuel.

They face 16 counts relating to conspiracy, diversion of petroleum products, and receiving proceeds from the allegedly diverted goods.

Prosecution counsel, Mr M. Y. Bello, told the court that the accused persons comprise employees of Dangote Industries and workers of various transport companies contracted to move diesel from Dangote depots to its facilities in Ibese and Obajana.

Among those identified as Dangote staff are Emmanuella Akamadu, Emmanuel Oku, Zango Umar, Lucky Otoide, and Ephraim Kanakapudi. Others were reportedly employed by companies including Arigen Integrated Ltd, Obat Ltd, Amaiden Energy Ltd, Regal Gate Ltd, Alkham Ltd, Prestige Ltd, and Opetrus Global Ltd.

The offences were allegedly committed between January 2022 and December 2023.

According to the prosecution, Shamsudden, acting on behalf of several companies contracted by Dangote Industries, allegedly diverted 1,530,893 litres of diesel, valued at over ₦1.53 billion. Similarly, Omojowo, representing Opetrus Global Ltd, was accused of diverting 2,455,229 litres of diesel, valued at over ₦2.45 billion.

The charges contravene provisions of the Money Laundering (Prevention and Prohibition) Act, 2022, and the Criminal Code Act.

All the defendants pleaded not guilty. The court was informed that some of them had previously been granted bail under different conditions.

A fresh amended charge was filed on Tuesday, following the recent arrests of Shamsudden, Ephraim, and Omojowo. Consequently, all defendants were re-arraigned.

Justice Dipeolu adjourned the matter to 22 and 23 July 2025 for the commencement of trial.

Alleged $1bn fraud: Court to rule on...

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Otorudo said his application, on behalf of the 5th and 6th defendants, was dated May 8 and filed on May 9. Busari acknowledged receipt of the EFCC's counter affidavit earlier that morning but stated readiness to proceed.

Busari said the application was filed under Sections 34, 35, 36, 41, and 46 of the Constitution (as amended) and Sections 159, 259, 296, and 298 of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA), 2015.

He said the application sought bail for Abiodun on liberal terms from EFCC custody, pending any formal charges, and an interim order compelling the EFCC to present him before the court as guaranteed by law.

Citing the court's April 24 order authorising the arrest and remand of Abiodun and others, Busari noted that his client had voluntarily contacted the EFCC on April 22, expressing willingness to surrender, and indeed turned himself in on April 28.

He added that Abiodun, who is reportedly battling a severe ailment, had been held for over 40 days without bail in breach of the statutory 14-day pdetention limit.

Busari argued that the EFCC was exploiting the court's lack of a specified remand period to detain Abiodun indefinitely, without charges being filed.

He further contended that the prosecution's counter affidavit failed to refute the facts in his client's supporting affidavit.

He insisted that the EFCC's main argument that Abiodun might flee if granted bail — was flawed, given that Abiodun had voluntarily surrendered.

He reminded the court that suspects are presumed innocent until proven guilty, and pre-trial detention must comply with the law.

On his part, Otorudo urged the court to vary the earlier order authorising the EFCC to detain his clients (the 5th and 6th defendants), noting they had voluntarily submitted themselves for investigation since April 25 and remained in custody without bail.

He said his clients were willing to appear for further investigation or trial if granted bail. He rejected the EFCC's claim that the charges were too serious to allow bail, arguing that the alleged offences were bailable under Nigerian law.

He therefore prayed the court to exercise its discretion in their favour.

In response, EFCC counsel Fadila Yusuf strongly opposed the bail requests. She informed the court that a five-paragraph counter affidavit with three supporting exhibits had been filed in reply to Abiodun's application.

Yusuf noted that Abiodun was seeking bail before any formal charge had been laid. She also urged the court to reject the bail application of the 5th and 6th defendants.

ONAKOYA VISITS TINUBU:
Chess champion and founder of Chess in Slums Africa, Tunde Onakoya (left) presenting President Bola Tinubu with his gold-plated Adire chessboard and his Guinness World Record certificate during his visit to the President.

Oyo postpones Adire carnival, exhibition

The Oyo State Government has announced the postponement of the much-anticipated Adire Carnival and Exhibition originally scheduled for Friday, 20 June 2025.

This was disclosed in a statement on Wednesday by the state's Commissioner for Information and Orientation, Dotun Oyelade, on behalf of the Commissioner for Culture and Tourism, Wasiu Olatunbosun.

According to the statement, the postponement is aimed at ensuring the event meets global best practices and provides a rich, seamless experience for attendees and participants.

Olatunbosun assured the public that a new date will be communicated in due course.

He reaffirmed the Makinde administration's commitment to promoting the culture and tourism sector, as enshrined in the Omituntun 2.0 Roadmap for Sustainable Development.

He highlighted the state's recent cultural milestones, including the successful hosting of events like the World Twins Festival, World Egungun Festival, Iyake International Festival, and the Aso-Ofi Festival.

Particularly, he noted the Aso-Ofi Festival's success in reviving indigenous textile traditions and inspiring a policy that encourages civil servants to wear Aso-Ofi as part of their dress code.

The Adire Carnival, organised in partnership with BIZRAIT and Adire Odua, was intended to celebrate indigenous craftsmanship and bolster the textile economy.

The commissioner expressed appreciation for the public's understanding and support, promising an even more impactful event once rescheduled.

Rivers 2025 budget anticipates...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

statutory appropriation protocols and preserves the integrity of public financial management."

The ₦1.48tn expenditure plan, backed by a projected ₦1.4tn revenue, was submitted to the National Assembly following presidential approval and the Supreme Court's ruling affirming the legality of the Rivers State 2025 appropriation process.

In his opening remarks, Ibas thanked the committee for its commitment.

"We in Rivers State are most grateful for your dedication. Despite your demanding schedules, you have shown unwavering resolve in fulfilling your constitutional responsibilities," he said.

He outlined key allocations in the proposed budget, including ₦324.5bn for infrastructure and transportation, ₦55bn for the relocation and expansion of the Rivers State University Teaching Hospital, and ₦50bn for zonal hospital upgrades.

Other major provisions include ₦38.85bn for shoreline protection and erosion control, ₦30bn for zonal secondary schools, and ₦5.75bn for primary school rehabilitation.

The budget also earmarks ₦2.5bn for women's economic empowerment, ₦3bn for youth resource centres, ₦20bn to recapitalise the Rivers State Microfinance Bank in support of small and medium-sized enterprises, and ₦117bn for pensions, gratuities, and employee benefits.

In his response, Chairman of the Ad-Hoc Committee, Prof Julius Ihonvbere, commended Ibas for his detailed presentation and expressed the committee's readiness to collaborate with him in restoring peace and development in Rivers State.

"We are committed to working with you to restore stability, peace, growth, and development in Rivers State," Ihonvbere said.

"Rivers has long stood as a shining example of what is possible with good leadership. That is why this committee is fully engaged."

He assured that the committee would thoroughly scrutinise the budget, inviting relevant officials for its proper defence.

Nigerian teen artiste dies after alleged beating in Ghana

A 19-year-old Nigerian musician identified as Destiny has reportedly died after being assaulted in Ghana's Volta Region.

The incident occurred on 28 May, following a disagreement between the victim and fellow Nigerians over alleged mismanagement of business funds.

According to sources, Destiny had travelled to Ghana to pursue his education and was staying in accommodation arranged by the same individuals who later confronted him over the disputed funds.

The confrontation turned violent when he failed to provide answers about the missing money.

A source familiar with the matter disclosed that the victim, a native of Edo State, sustained severe injuries during the assault and died shortly after.

"The men who took him to Ghana accused him of diverting money from a business they introduced him to. They beat him up badly in his apartment, and he died from the injuries," the source said.

It was also revealed that his body was abandoned at the scene, and the Ghanaian police later discovered his remains.

While no arrests have been confirmed, local contacts say the matter has been reported to the police, and investigations are ongoing.

In a video recorded before his death, Destiny had introduced himself as a streamer and musician, expressing his desire to attend Streamers University and make his mother proud.

His death follows the killing of 77-year-old Nigerian Uber driver Olatunji Bolaji in the United States earlier this year.

'Nigeria drifting into dual leadership'

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

where the presidential candidate should come from?" he asked, accusing the minister of staging what amounts to "a coup" within the party using coercion and deception.

"He no longer has the moral right to determine the direction of the PDP. He's already picked his candidate and has no say in what the party will do."

Asked whether he might abandon the PDP, Momodu rejected the idea of joining the APC outright. "If I wanted to join the APC, I wouldn't be speaking to you," he said.

"My soul is totally out of it. I cannot sit in a room where one man dictates to adults who have worked all their lives."

As Nigeria prepares to mark 26 years of uninterrupted democracy on June 12, Momodu warned that the nation is sliding back into a form of civilian dictatorship.

"We've damaged this democracy," he lamented, adding that today's political class, across all tiers of government, has shown a shocking disregard for democratic principles and public welfare.

Referencing the historic struggle that led to the recognition of June 12 as Democracy Day, Momodu said those who fought for democratic governance would be devastated by the current state of the country.

"All those who suffered for this democracy, especially those who are now in heaven—if they can see us, they would be crying," he added.

NEWS

ABUAD researchers secure ₦480m worth of research equipment from Seeding Labs

Professor of Industrial Chemistry and Director of Academic Planning at Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti (ABUAD), Oluwafemi Ogunmodede, has secured 79 sophisticated research and science equipment items for the university, valued at $298,104.71 (₦480.2 million), from the international organisation Seeding Labs.

This was disclosed by ABUAD's Director of Corporate Affairs, Tunde Olofintila, in a press statement issued on Wednesday.

He confirmed that the university had already taken delivery of the state-of-the-art equipment, which adds to several earlier research grants won by other academics at the institution.

"With this latest addition secured by Prof. Ogunmodede, the quantum of state-of-the-art research and science equipment at ABUAD has reached a new height," Olofintila stated.

He recalled that in 2023, Prof. Pius Okiki, a Professor of Microbiology and Provost of the College of Sciences, secured research equipment worth $221,041.98 (₦356 million).

Similarly, Prof. Olusegun Adebayo AdeOluwa of the Department of Pharmacology and Therapeutics, College of Medicine and Health Sciences, submitted an application to Seeding Labs in January 2023.

Following the approval of Prof. Ade Oluwa's request, the university paid a counterpart fund of $27,800 and subsequently received 53 specialised research and science equipment items, valued at ₦427.4 million, on July 30, 2024.

In addition, Dr Juliet Olayinka of the Department of Pharmacology, College of Medicine and Health Sciences, won an Observer 5 Microscope with Fluorescence and Camera from the Africa Microscopy Initiative in November 2024.

The microscope, valued at $80,000 (₦136 million), was delivered to the institution in April 2025.

ABUAD founder, Aare Afe Babalola, commended the efforts of the researchers, describing their success in attracting world-class equipment as a reflection of their commitment to enhancing the university's contributions to teaching, research and societal impact, three functions recognised by the World Bank as core to any university.

FIRE INCIDENT:
The scene of the fire incident at the front of the NASFAT praying ground on Wednesday. Credit: DARE OLAWIN.

Petrol tanker bursts into flames near NASFAT camp on Lagos-Ibadan expressway

Panic erupted on Wednesday as a petrol-laden tanker went up in flames along the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway, directly in front of the NASFAT Camp.

The tanker, which reportedly fell while in motion, caught fire shortly after tipping over, sending thick black smoke into the sky and causing alarm among motorists and residents in the area.

An X user, @SegunOladejo_, who identifies as #EndSARS Segun | Legal, posted, "A tanker is burning on the Lagos-Ibadan expressway just opposite the NASFAT praying ground. The fire is horrible."

This latest incident comes shortly after a similar tanker explosion occurred on Monday between the Oremeji and Olorunsogo areas of the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway, which also led to serious traffic disruptions.

Although no casualties were recorded in Monday's incident, the fire reportedly raged for hours before it was finally brought under control by personnel from the Oyo State Fire Service

Stakeholders advocate reserved legislative seats for women

Hameed Braimah

As part of efforts to increase women's participation in political decision-making, stakeholders have called for the creation of special legislative seats reserved exclusively for women, aimed at boosting female representation in Nigeria's parliament.

This position was put forward during an advocacy and town hall meeting organised by FIDA Nigeria under the "Advance Women Political Participation Project," themed Advancing Women's Inclusion and Representation in Leadership and Political Processes in Nigeria.

A bill to establish these reserved seats has already been introduced and passed second reading in the House of Representatives on 9 July 2024, under the leadership of Deputy Speaker Rt. Hon. Benjamin Kalu and 12 co-sponsors.

The meeting, aimed at building consensus among stakeholders and consolidating memoranda for submission to the Constitutional Reform Committee during upcoming zonal public hearings, was supported by UN Women and funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) of the UK Government.

According to Mrs Eliana Martins, Country Vice/National President of FIDA Nigeria, the Reserved Seats for Women Bill is a transformative piece of legislation intended to create additional seats solely for women in both the National and State Houses of Assembly.

Speaking on her behalf, Princess Francisca Elema, Chairperson of FIDA Edo State, described the initiative as a bold and historic move toward achieving gender equity and inclusive governance.

Uzum urges Delta authorities to collaborate with FG

Ajuwa Victor

Lawyer, politician, and policy analyst Eugene Azuka Uzum has urged key players in the Delta State Government to leverage the recent rapprochement between the PDP and APC to address the state's growing infrastructural challenges.

Speaking on the state's developmental setbacks, Uzum highlighted the urgent need for constructive collaboration among stakeholders, particularly with the Federal Government, to attract meaningful investments and improve infrastructure.

He advised the state government to adopt innovative approaches to governance, particularly in attracting federal presence, while also tackling insecurity decisively to create a more conducive environment for investment.

Uzum expressed concern over the increasing prevalence of political rhetoric in the state, arguing that leaders should instead seize the opportunity presented by the improved relationship between the state and the federal administrations to promote socioeconomic and infrastructural growth.

He specifically pointed out the poor state of road infrastructure, noting that many roads categorised as Trunk A are in severe disrepair.

He also lamented the deterioration of the agricultural and industrial sectors, attributing it to persistent insecurity and inadequate electricity supply, especially in the coastal regions of the state.

CSDA GM commends Okpebholo for Udomi electrification breakthrough

Gloria Agbongiasede

The General Manager of the Edo State Community and Social Development Agency (Edo-CSDA), Ms Ivie Idahosa, has commended the Governor of Edo State, Senator Monday Okpebholo, for granting the agency the mandate to implement the Udomi Electrification Project, a major rural infrastructure milestone marked by the installation of a 2.5MVA injection substation in Udomi, Esan Central Local Government Area.

Speaking at a press briefing in Benin City, Ms Idahosa described the project as a transformative intervention that will significantly enhance electricity supply to Udomi and adjoining communities.

She listed the benefiting areas to include Udomi I, Ujabhole I, Unogbo, Idumoghodor, Ibhiolulu, and Afuda, noting that the improved power access would impact thousands of residents and numerous small enterprises.

"This project is more than the installation of electrical infrastructure. It symbolises access to better education, healthcare, economic opportunities, and social development. Through this intervention, we are not only lighting up homes but powering livelihoods and strengthening essential services across these communities," she said.

Ms Idahosa credited the initiative to Governor Okpebholo's grassroots-oriented leadership and unwavering commitment to the SHINE Agenda, which prioritises sustainable development through improved infrastructure, access to healthcare, education, and the responsible management of natural resources.

"The Udomi Electrification Project is a testament to the governor's sincerity in delivering on his campaign promises," she stated.

"It is also a practical demonstration of inclusive governance and people-focused service delivery."

She further disclosed that Edo-CSDA has undertaken similar electrification projects across the three senatorial districts of the State, affirming that these efforts have expanded energy access, spurred economic activity, and enhanced the delivery of essential services in rural communities.

Edo First Lady's Office marks World Day Against Child Labour, calls for collective action

Ajuwa Victor

The Office of the Edo State First Lady has called for unified and urgent action to end the scourge of child labour across the State and ensure every child enjoys a safe, nurturing, and supportive environment.

Delivering her remarks during a commemorative event marking the 2025 World Day Against Child Labour at Government House, Benin City, the Coordinator of the First Lady's Office, Mrs Edesili Okpebholo Anani, emphasised the need for collaboration among parents, guardians, caregivers, community leaders, civil society actors, and government officials to eliminate practices that expose children to exploitation.

"Child labour is not just about children being made to work—it is about the theft of their innocence, the destruction of their childhood, and the endangerment of their futures," Mrs Anani said.

"This global crisis perpetuates poverty, stifles development, and violates the basic rights of children. It is a crime that must be prosecuted and prevented."

She recounted the harrowing experience of Miss Peace, a young Tarok girl who was severely burned with a hot pressing iron by her employer in Caribbean Estate, Airport Road, Benin City.

Describing the incident as shocking and inhumane, she condemned the act as part of a broader pattern of violence and abuse that many vulnerable children face.

Mrs Anani reaffirmed the commitment of the State government to improving child welfare through robust investments in education, healthcare, and social protection.

"The Distinguished Senator Monday Okpebholo remains deeply committed to the well-being of every child in Edo State," she said.

The Nigerian Observer ...That the people may know

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Foreign

Austrians hold minute of silence and vigil for 10 victims of school shooting

Austria has held a minute of silence for 10 people killed in a school shooting, after thousands gathered for a candlelight vigil for the victims on Tuesday evening.

Police said the 21-year-old suspect, a former student, took his own life in a school bathroom shortly after the gun attack in Graz on Tuesday - the deadliest in the country's recent history.

In a statement on Wednesday, police said they found a "farewell letter" and a non-functional pipe bomb during a search of the suspect's home. Authorities have not confirmed the gunman's motive.

The incident, which left a further 12 people injured, took place at Dreierschützengasse secondary school in the north-west of the city.

Six females and three males were killed in the attack, and a seventh female died later in hospital. Austria's APA news agency has reported that seven of those killed were pupils.

Three days of mourning have been declared in Austria, and a nationwide minute's silence was held on Wednesday at 10:00 local time in memory of the victims. The Austrian flag has been lowered to half-mast on all public buildings.

After the minute's silence in Graz's main square, one woman, Tores, told BBC News that she knew one of the boys who had died. He was 17.

"I've know this family for a long time, including the son of the family, and knew that he attended that school. I rang immediately, to ask if everything is OK. Then they let me know at midday, that the boy was one of those slaughtered," she said.

"What happened yesterday is completely awful, the whole of Austria is in mourning," she said. "This is terrible for the whole of Austria."

At the vigil on Tuesday night, Graz residents said they wanted to turn the city's main square into a sea of candles, and that is what they did.

In the whispering silence, thousands of mostly young people gathered over the course of the evening, alone or clutching the arms or shoulders of their friends. They lit candles, cried, or stood for a while in prayer or contemplation.

Then they slowly came forward to hand candles to volunteers who arranged them carefully on the steps of the fountain.

The Archduke Johann fountain is known as the heart of the old town of Graz, in front of the city hall. On Tuesday night it became a symbol of the grief, and solidarity, of the people of Austria.

"When you hear about it, you have so much sympathy for the people, maybe you could have known someone," Felix Platzer, a passerby at the vigil, told the Reuters news agency.

"This is an example of solidarity and you grieve together and together it is easier to cope," he added.

The school where the attack took place will remain closed until further notice.

Austrian Chancellor Christian Stocker said Tuesday was a "dark day in [the] history of our country" and declared the shooting a "national tragedy".

"A school is more than just a place to learn - it is a space for trust, for feeling comfortable and for having a future," he told the conference, adding this safe place had been "violated".

VIGIL FOR 10 VICTIMS:
Mourners at night vigil in honour of the victims

LA police enforce curfew as Trump vows to 'liberate' city

Los Angeles police say they have made "mass arrests" after a fifth day of protests over US President Donald Trump's immigration raids.

Mayor Karen Bass declared an overnight curfew within a relatively small area of the city's downtown district, saying businesses were being vandalised and looted.

Elsewhere, the immigration raids that triggered the protests last Friday have continued, with deployed National Guard troops now protecting border control agents on enforcement operations.

Trump's row with state officials ramped up after he deployed troops to LA. The president has now vowed to "liberate" the city, but has been accused by California Governor Gavin Newsom of an "assault" on democracy.

On Tuesday, Trump defended his decision to send 4,000 National Guard troops and 700 Marines, saying it was to prevent the city being "conquered by a foreign enemy".

These troops lack the authority to make arrests, and have instead been tasked only with protecting federal property and personnel.

Newsom hit back at the president: "He again chose escalation; he chose more force." The California governor, who is seen as a potential presidential contender for the Democratic Party, warned that "other states are next".

After the LA curfew entered force at 20:00 local time on Tuesday (03:00 GMT on Wednesday), police moved through downtown areas, firing rubber bullets to try to disperse crowds.

The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) later said "multiple groups" were still congregating in the district.

Officers did not confirm in their evening update how many people had been detained. The mayor earlier said nearly 200 people had so far been arrested on Tuesday, in addition to the dozens of others in previous days.

Explaining the curfew, Bass said she wanted "to stop the vandalism, to stop the looting". She added: "We reached a tipping point."

The order affects an area of about one square mile in America's second-largest city.

Chaotic protests also sprung up on Tuesday in several other US cities:

In Atlanta, Georgia, riot police used tear gas on protesters who fired fireworks towards officers at a demonstration attended by hundreds

Police in New York told the BBC dozens were arrested for blocking vehicular traffic after several thousand marched into lower Manhattan

Texas Governor Greg Abbott sent National Guard troops to San Antonio, where immigration rallies are planned

LA's mayor said 23 businesses had been looted on Monday night, though she did not provide an estimate of financial losses to the city from the at-times violent disorder.

Elsewhere in the sprawling city, it was a normal Tuesday, as tens of thousands of children went to school, commuter traffic choked the streets and tourists strolled Hollywood Boulevard.

LA police chief Jim McDonnell said the curfew was "not about silencing voices", but was a necessary measure to save lives and safeguard property.

Bass also said Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) had provoked the unrest by conducting raids on Latino areas in the city in recent days.

"If [the raids are] going to go on for 30 days, and that's what the rumour is, and, if we want to see our city peaceful again, I will call upon the administration one more time to end the raids," she said.

On Tuesday, National Guard troops, who were previously guarding federal buildings, began assisting ICE agents with their "daily enforcement operations", a spokesperson for the border agency told the BBC.

Trump says US-China deal 'is done'

US President Donald Trump has said a deal with China "is done" after two days of talks between top officials in London.

Trump said that, subject to final approval from President Xi Jinping and himself, the US will get the rare earth metals it needs, while Chinese students can take up their places at American colleges.

Earlier, the US and China said they had agreed in principle a framework for de-escalating trade tensions between the world's two biggest economies.

Last month, Washington and Beijing agreed a temporary truce over trade tariffs but each country has since accused the other of breaching the deal.

Posting on his Truth Social platform, the president said: "Our deal with China is done, subject to final approval with President Xi and me.

"Full magnets, and any necessary rare earths, will be supplied, up front, by China. Likewise, we will provide to China what was agreed to, including Chinese students using our colleges and universities (which has always been good with me!).

"We are getting a total of 55% tariffs, China is getting 10%. Relationship is excellent!"

Chinese exports of rare earth minerals, which are crucial for modern technology, were high on the agenda of the meeting in London.

Following the talks, US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said the deal between the two countries should result in restrictions on rare earth minerals and magnets being resolved.

The US has criticised China, saying it has been slow to release exports of rare earth metals and magnets which are essential for manufacturing everything from smartphones to electric vehicles.

Meanwhile, Washington has restricted China's access to US goods such as semiconductors and other related technologies linked to artificial intelligence (AI).

"We have reached a framework to implement the Geneva consensus," Lutnick told reporters.

"Once the presidents approve it, we will then seek to implement it," he added.

The new round of negotiations followed a phone call between Donald Trump and China's leader Xi Jinping last week which the US President described as a "very good talk".

"The two sides have, in principle, reached a framework for implementing the consensus reached by the two heads of state during the phone call on June 5th and the consensus reached at the Geneva meeting," China's Vice Commerce Minister Li Chenggang said

When Trump announced sweeping tariffs on imports from a number of countries earlier this year, China was the hardest hit. Beijing responded with its own higher rates on US imports, and this triggered tit-for-tat increases that peaked at 145%.

In May, talks held in Switzerland led to a temporary truce that Trump called a "total reset".

Bodies of schoolchildren found after bus swept away by South Africa floods

The search for schoolchildren swept away by floods in South Africa's Eastern Cape province has resumed after being halted overnight, officials have said.

The children were on their way to school in the town of Mthatha when their bus was carried away in flood waters as it was crossing a bridge on Tuesday morning.

A total of eight bodies, including that of the bus driver, have so far been recovered, Eastern Cape community safety official Xolile Nqatha has told private TV station Newzroom Afrika.

Other officials said three students were rescued on Tuesday, but it was unclear how many pupils were on the bus, which has since been found on a riverbank with no-one inside.

Public broadcaster SABC reported that the three children who were rescued were found clinging to trees.

On Wednesday morning, Eastern Cape Premier Oscar Mabuyane visited the scene to witness rescue efforts, and to meet affected communities.

He told Newzroom Afrika that while the situation was a "difficult one", he was "quite happy" with the response of the emergency services.

South Africa has been hit by heavy snow, rains and gale force winds that have officially claimed the lives of 14 people, nine from the floods and five in a road accident.

Nearly 500,000 homes were left without electricity on Tuesday - and state-owned power provider Eskom says efforts are being made to restore connections.

South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa has offered his condolences to the families of those who died as he urged citizens to "display caution, care and cooperation as the worst impacts of winter weather take effect across the country".

The Eastern Cape - the birthplace of anti-apartheid icon Nelson Mandela - has been worst-affected by the icy conditions, along with KwaZulu-Natal province.

Foreign

Iran executes man over 2022 anti-government protests

A man has been executed in Iran, three years after he was arrested during the nationwide anti-government protests in 2022, the judiciary says.

Mojahed Kourkouri, also known as Abbas Kourkouri, was sentenced to death after being convicted of armed attacks and membership of a "rebellion group", according to the judiciary's Mizan news agency.

He was accused of killing seven people, including nine-year-old Kian Pirfalak, during protests in the city of Izeh. Kian's family said he was killed by security forces, but authorities maintained that a "rioter" shot him.

Amnesty International said Kourkouri was subjected to torture and that his trial was "grossly unfair".

Kourkouri is the 11th person known to have been executed in relation to the protests, which were sparked by the death in custody of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old woman who was detained by morality police in Tehran in September 2022 for allegedly wearing her hijab "improperly".

Hundreds of people were killed and thousands detained in a violent crackdown by security forces, which portrayed the protests as "riots".

Kourkouri was accused of opening fire on a car carrying Kian Pirfalak and his family in Izeh, in the south-western province of Khuzestan, at the height of the unrest that November.

State authorities blamed "terrorist agents" for Kian's killing, and later arrested Kourkouri during an armed raid the following month, during which Kourkouri was shot and injured in the knee, human rights groups said.

Kian's family has repeatedly said it does not think Kourkouri was involved in the boy's killing.

At Kian's funeral, the boy's mother was overheard in a video telling mourners: "Hear it from me myself on how the shooting happened, so they can't say it was by terrorists, because they're lying."

"Plainclothes forces shot my child. That is it," Zeynab Molaei said.

Later that the day, she appeared to recant the remarks in a state TV interview, warning that they should "not be misused". She looked visibly distressed, prompting many on social media to warn that she might have been coerced.

The judiciary's announcement that Kourkouri had been executed sparked condemnation among human rights groups.

Amnesty International said Kourkouri's trial was unfair because he had been denied access to an independently chosen lawyer and his confessions, which were broadcast on Iranian state media, had been forced.

Bomb attack plans found at Austria gunman's home

Abandoned plans for a bomb attack have been found at the home of the suspected gunman in a school shooting in Austria, police have said.

Police in the city of Graz also found a non-functional pipe bomb, and a "farewell" letter and video during the search, they said in a statement.

Ten people were killed in the attack at the secondary school on Tuesday - the deadliest in the country's recent history.

The suspect, a 21-year-old former student at the school, took his own life in a school bathroom shortly after the attack, according to police. Authorities have not yet drawn any conclusions on the gunman's possible motive.

The incident, which left a further 11 people injured, took place at Dreierschützengasse secondary school in the north-west of the city.

Six females and three males were killed in the attack, and a seventh female later died in hospital.

A teacher and nine students aged between 14 and 17 were among the victims, police said. One of the victims was a Polish citizen, while the other nine were Austrian citizens.

Three days of mourning were declared in Austria following the attack, and a nationwide minute's silence was held on Wednesday at 10:00 local time (08:00 GMT) in memory of the victims. The Austrian flag has been lowered to half-mast on all public buildings.

After the minute's silence in Graz's main square, one woman, Tores, told BBC News that she knew one of the boys who had died. He was 17.

"I've know this family for a long time, including the son of the family, and knew that he attended that school. I rang immediately, to ask if everything is OK. Then they let me know at midday, that the boy was one of those slaughtered," she said.

Police said the suspect was born in Styria and lived with his single mother, who was also Austrian, in the Graz-Umgebung District.

They added that his father, of Armenian origin, had not lived with them since his parents' separation.

Current information suggests the shooter legally owned the two guns used in the attack - a pistol and a shotgun - and had a firearms licence, police said.

The gunman, who has not yet been named, did not graduate from the school, Interior Minister Gerhard Karner told a news conference on Tuesday.

Police also confirmed the gunman was not known to police before the attack.

They have increased security measures around schools in the city.

SUSPECTS:
Police officers walk towards the flat of the 21-year-old's suspect

Kenyan blogger was hit and assaulted to death, autopsy reveals

A Kenyan blogger who died in police custody was hit on the head and his death was likely to have been caused by assault, a post-mortem has revealed.

This contradicts police claims that Albert Ojwang "sustained head injuries after hitting his head against a cell wall".

His death has sparked widespread outrage in Kenya, with rights groups demanding that police be held accountable. Mr Ojwang was detained following a complaint by the deputy police chief, who accused him of tarnishing his name on social media.

"The cause of death is very clear; head injury, neck compression and other injuries spread all over the body that are pointing towards assault," state pathologist Bernard Midia said.

Police have not yet commented on the findings.

Mr Ojwang, a digital creator who microblogged on X and Facebook on topical political and social issues, was arrested in Homa Bay, a town in western Kenya, on Friday.

The 31-year-old, who is also said to be a teacher, was detained over a post on X that was allegedly critical of Deputy Inspector General of Police Eliud Lagat.

He was subsequently transferred over 350km (220 miles) to the capital, Nairobi, and booked into the Central Police Station on Saturday.

Police said he was later found unconscious in his cell with self-inflicted injuries.

But an autopsy, conducted by five pathologists who released a unanimous report, revealed that Mr Ojwang had severe head injuries and suffered neck compression and multiple soft tissue trauma.

Dr Midia, who led the team of pathologists, said that Mr Ojwang did not hit himself on the wall, as police had said in a statement on Sunday.

He said if Mr Ojwang had done this, the pattern of injuries would have been different, and frontal bleeding on the head would be seen.

"But the bleeds that we found on the scalp… on the skin of the head were spaced, including on the face, sides of the head and the back of the head," Dr Midia said at a press conference.

"There were also multiple soft tissue injuries spread all over the body, including the head, neck, upper limbs and the trunk and lower limbs... these were injuries that were externally inflicted," he added.

The injuries were consistent with "external assault" and there were also signs of a struggle, according to the pathologists.

Kenya's Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA) has also ruled out the possibility that Mr Ojwang might have killed himself.

The agency added that its premilitary findings showed that CCTV systems at the Central Police Station had been interfered with.

Mr Ojwang's father, Meshack Ojwang, has appealed to President William Ruto to help him get justice for his son.

"Help me as a taxpayer. The officers who picked up my son saw our home was humble and assumed we didn't matter," the father said.

In a statement, Ruto said he was shocked by Mr Ojwang's death and ordered a "swift, transparent, and credible" investigation.

"This tragic occurrence, at the hands of the police, is heartbreaking and unacceptable," the president added.

He, however, cautioned the public against making "premature judgments or drawing conclusions that could compromise the process and its outcome".

The Digital Content Creators Association of Kenya paid tribute to Mr Ojwang, saying: "Albert was more than a content creator - he was a voice of the youth, a symbol of resilience, and an embodiment of the dreams and hopes of a generation that uses digital platforms to inspire change. His legacy will not be silenced."

Elon Musk says he regrets some posts about Donald Trump

Billionaire Elon Musk has said he regrets some of the posts he made about US President Donald Trump during their war of words on social media.

"They went too far," he wrote on his social media platform X.

The two were embroiled in a public fallout after the Tesla owner stepped back from his White House role and called Trump's tax bill a "disgusting abomination".

His post comes after Trump said he was open to the possibility of reconciliation in an interview with the New York Post on Wednesday. The president said he was a "little disappointed" about the fallout, but there were "no hard feelings".

"I think he feels very badly that he said that," Trump said of Musk's blistering social media barrage.

The budget, which includes huge tax breaks and more defence spending, was passed by the House of Representatives last month and is now being considered by senators.

Musk urged Americans to call their representatives in Washington to "kill the bill" as he believed it would "cause a recession in the second half of the year".

The tech entrepeneur claimed, without evidence, that Trump appears in unreleased government files linked to the late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. The White House rubbished those claims.

In response, Trump said Musk had "lost his mind" and threatened to cancel his government contracts, which have an estimated value of $38bn (£28bn). A significant chunk of that goes to Musk's space technology company SpaceX.

"I think it's a very bad thing, because he's very disrespectful. You could not disrespect the office of the president," Trump said in an interview with NBC on Sunday.

Musk appeared to have deleted many of his posts over the weekend, including one calling for Trump's impeachment.

Musk was the largest donor for Trump's 2024 presidential campaign and had been considered the president's right-hand man.

Former Trump aide Steve Bannon called for Musk, who was born in South Africa, to be deported.

US Vice-President JD Vance said he hoped that "eventually Elon comes back into the fold" but that it might be difficult considering he went "nuclear".

Most Republicans have called for the two men to reconcile, while Democrats have watched on as the feud unfolded.

Their fallout came shortly after Musk left the Department of Government Efficiency (Doge), after just 129 days in the job.

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Sports

● Football ● Athletics ● Golf ● Basketball ● Tennis ● Boxing

Grassroots Youth Football Development League Super 4 set for June 14–15

● closing ceremonies lined up for Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium

Edward Oseghe

The much-anticipated Super 4 Stage of the Grassroots Youth Football Development League 2024/2025 Season is scheduled to take place on Saturday, 14th and Sunday, 15th June, 2025 at the Nipost Football Field, Egor Local Government Area and Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium, Benin City.

Draw Ceremony Confirms Final 8 Teams

Following the official draw ceremony held on Tuesday at the Edo State Football Association Board Room, eight teams—four from the Under-14 category and four from the Under-17 category—have been confirmed to battle for the top honours in the final stage.

Highlighting the Maiden Edition's Success

The maiden edition of the Grassroots Youth Football Development League has run successfully across Edo South and Edo North, with Edo Central preparing to join in the second edition. The league has provided a powerful platform for young talents to showcase their footballing abilities and sportsmanship.

Organizers are pleased with the high level of discipline and enthusiasm demonstrated by participating teams and stakeholders, reaffirming the league's goal of promoting youth engagement and talent development through football.

Community Impact and Future Prospects

The positive reception and growing popularity of the league have inspired more teams and communities to express interest in joining future editions. Several clubs that missed out this season have already signaled their intention to participate in upcoming seasons.

As the maiden edition draws to a close, organizers are optimistic that more partners and sponsors will come on board to support the vision of building a sustainable football development ecosystem in Edo State and beyond.

NRFF unveils Stallions Sevens Squad for 2025 Rugby Africa Men's Sevens in Mauritius

Edward Oseghe

The Nigeria Rugby Football Federation (NRFF) has officially announced the Stallions Sevens squad set to represent the nation at the 2025 Rugby Africa Men's Sevens Tournament, taking place from June 21–22 at the Labourdonnais Sports Club in Mauritius.

Nigeria will compete alongside eleven of Africa's top rugby sevens nations, including South Africa, Kenya, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Madagascar, Tunisia, Zambia, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, and host nation Mauritius. The winner of the tournament will earn a coveted spot in the 2025 World Rugby Sevens Challenger Series.

Drawn in Pool B, Nigeria will face South Africa, Burkina Faso, and Zambia in group-stage matches on Saturday, June 21.

The fixtures are as follows (WAT):

7:06 AM – Nigeria vs South Africa

9:28 AM – Nigeria vs Burkina Faso

12:12 PM – Nigeria vs Zambia

Head Coach Steve Lewis expressed confidence in the squad's readiness following an intense two-month build-up which included appearances at the Abeokuta Cup 7s, London Floodlit 7s, Summer Socials, and Manor 7s tournaments.

"We're pleased with the players' commitment and growth. "It's great to have Declan Nwachukwu and Kolade Adedoyin back from injury, and we're excited about the fresh energy from new call-ups like Joshua Addams, Isa Omale, Tuoyo Egodo, and Akeem Yusuf," Lewis said.

The squad features a blend of experience and emerging talent, with stalwarts like Frederick Henry-Ajudua and Oghenesuvwe Obano bringing physicality and presence, while captain Kitto Oliver provides leadership and composure.

Final preparations will be held at a pre-tournament training camp in London before the team heads to Mauritius.

2025 Stallions Sevens Squad:

Isa Omale
Matthew Ilube
Kolade Adedoyin
Gabriel John Etim
Joshua Addams
Kitto Oliver (Captain)
Tuoyo Anthony Egodo
Oghenesuvwe Obano
Frederick Henry-Ajudua
Richard Adeniyi-Jones
Declan Nwachukwu
Akeem Yusuf

Reserves:

Michael Ogunwole
John Tobi Anthony

Head Coach: Steve Lewis

Team Manager: Azeez Ladipo
Medic: Dr Fikunola Orafidiya

Meanwhile, the NRFF has expressed gratitude to the National Sports Commission, partners, and supporters for

Shaibu assumes duty as DG National Institute of Sports

A significant new phase has commenced in the landscape of Nigerian sports with the formal assumption of office by Hon. Philip Shaibu as the Director General of the National Institute of Sports (NIS).

Shaibu, the immediate past Deputy Governor of Edo State, marked his first day in office with a strategic visit to the headquarters of the National Sports Commission, where he met with Chairman Shehu Dikko.

The meeting between Shaibu and Dikko was described as cordial and forward-looking, with both men exchanging ideas on how best to revitalise the nation's sports sector.

Their discussions centred on fostering closer collaboration between the NIS and the Sports Commission, with a shared commitment to reposition Nigerian sports for sustained excellence and international competitiveness.

Shaibu brings to the role not only a deep passion for sports development but also a rich reservoir of experience in administration and grassroots mobilisation.

Observers within the sector view his appointment as an opportunity to break from a past marked by bureaucratic inertia and inconsistent policies.

In his remarks, Shaibu signalled his readiness to implement reforms aimed at strengthening sports infrastructure, identifying and nurturing talent nationwide, and institutionalising a performance-driven culture.

2025 LFLP U-17 Taekwondo Championship unveils groundbreaking scoring Tech as over 200 Young Athletes Vie for glory

Final preparations are underway as the 2025 U-17 Lycée Français Louis Pasteur (LFLP) Taekwondo Championship gears up for a thrilling showdown on Saturday, introducing revolutionary scoring technology that promises to raise the bar for youth martial arts competition in Nigeria.

The second edition of the prestigious tournament is set to take place at the LFLP Basketball Sports Court in Victoria Island, Lagos.

This year's event is making headlines with the deployment of advanced officiating tools aimed at ensuring greater accuracy, fairness, and professionalism in every match.

Leading the innovation is the Gen 2 Daedo Protector and Scoring System (PSS)—an internationally certified platform renowned for its precision and consistency, especially at cadet and junior competition levels.

The LFLP Championship becomes one of the first youth-focused tournaments in Nigeria to adopt this next-generation system.

Further enhancing the credibility of the event, the Naija Taekwondo Initiative will power an Instant Video Replay system.

NSC charges Sports Federations on unity of purpose

The National Sports Commission (NSC) has urged leaders of the country's various sports federations to work together to achieve President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's "Renewed Hope" agenda for the sports sector.

NSC Chairman Shehu Dikko made the call on Wednesday, June 11, 2025, during a joint Executive Board meeting with the Nigeria Olympic Committee (NOC), held at the Association of National Olympic Committees of Africa (ANOCA) office in Abuja.

Dikko described the federations as the operational arms of the commission and encouraged them to align with the President's "Renewed Hope" agenda to create a strong sports economy.

"As Chairman of the National Sports Commission, my Director General and I were invited to be part of this important meeting with NOC members, so we can collaborate, discuss challenges in our sports, and find ways to improve. We need to work towards creating the sports economy we envision," he said.

New Atalanta boss keen to retain Ademola Lookman

Newly appointed Atalanta head coach, Ivan Juric, is eager to retain Nigerian international and reigning CAF African Player of the Year, Ademola Lookman, amid transfer interest from top European clubs.

Lookman has been heavily linked with a move away from the Bergamo-based side, with clubs like Napoli, Juventus, Barcelona, and Arsenal reportedly monitoring his situation. However, Juric has made it clear that he wants the dynamic forward to remain at the club.

Speaking to Calcio Napoli, the former Torino manager stated that he has not asked the board to consider selling any key players, including Lookman.

"The idea is to keep both Lookman and Ederson. The club has a clear vision for the transfer market, but I haven't made any player requests—not even for those I've previously coached," Juric said.

Lookman enjoyed an outstanding campaign last season, scoring 22 goals and providing 5 assists in 46 appearances across all competitions.

The 27-year-old has one year remaining on his contract with Atalanta, and it remains to be seen whether the club will offer him an extension.

Lookman

SPORTS

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President Federation Cup Final: Kwara FA Chairman rallies support for Kwara United

MALLAM IDRIS MUSA

With the countdown underway to the 2025 President Federation Cup final, Chairman of the Kwara State Football Association, Mallam Idris Musa Thuraya, has met with members of the Sports Writers Association of Nigeria (SWAN) Kwara State Chapter, to discuss preparations and media support for Kwara United's clash with Abakaliki FC.

The highly anticipated final will hold on Saturday, June 28, 2025, at the Mobolaji Johnson Arena, Onikan, Lagos — marking the first time in history that Kwara United will be playing in the final of the national cup competition.

During the interface, Mallam Thuraya described the feat as monumental for Kwara football and commended the players, coaches, and supporters for their unwavering commitment. He stressed that the Football Association is doing everything within its capacity to ensure the team gets the needed support to bring the trophy home.

"Kwara has never gotten to this stage before. On our part at the FA, we have been everywhere, working tirelessly to ensure the right structures and the best people are in place to help Kwara United clinch the victory," he said.

The FA Chairman emphasized the urgent need for sponsorship, stating that the team's preparation and logistics require financial backing beyond what the government alone can provide.

"We must augment government efforts. We are calling on all stakeholders political office holders, business leaders, and football supporters to support this project. Kwara United is not just representing a club, they are carrying the pride of the entire state," he added.

2026 World Cup: Australia secures spot as 11th Nation to qualify

Australia has officially secured qualification for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, becoming the 11th nation to do so.

The Socceroos confirmed their place after a 2-1 victory over Saudi Arabia on Tuesday. Following a narrow 1-0 win against Japan in their previous match, Australia needed to avoid a heavy defeat—losing by fewer than five goals in Jeddah—to ensure progression.

This marks the first time in 12 years that Australia has earned an automatic World Cup qualification.

It will also be their sixth consecutive appearance at the global tournament. Saudi Arabia took an early lead in the 19th minute through Abdulrahman Al-Aboud, but Australia responded with goals from Connor Metcalfe and Mitch Duke to secure the comeback win.

Australia now joins Jordan and Uzbekistan among the latest teams to qualify.

Other nations that have already booked their spots include Japan, New Zealand, Iran, and Argentina. As co-hosts, the United States, Canada, and Mexico automatically qualified for the tournament.

AUSTRALIA CELEBRATING AFTER SECURE SPOT

Mexico readies for historic third World Cup as Azteca Stadium tensions grow

With a year until Mexico makes history as the first three-time World Cup host, the dream of a spectacular showcase is colliding with the practical challenges of modernising the iconic Azteca Stadium for global soccer's premier event.

Beneath the imposing silhouette of Mexico's football cathedral – where Pele dazzled with Brazil in 1970 and Maradona's 'hand of God' propelled Argentina to glory in 1986 – construction crews tackle the formidable task of bringing one of the sport's most storied venues into the 21st century.

The stakes are magnified as the 'Santa Ursula colossus' will host the tournament's opening match, a global spectacle that will focus the world's attention on Mexico from day one.

Renovations will expand the stadium's capacity from 87,000 to 90,000, with upgrades centred on meeting FIFA standards through new changing rooms, enhanced hospitality zones, revamped VIP areas and additional seating in spaces previously occupied by boxes and lounges.

While government officials and football administrators envisioned the project as a symbol of national pride, the renovation process has eroded trust between developers, local residents and other stakeholders.

Stadium administrators announced in February that they had secured a 2.1 billion peso ($110.19 million) credit line from local financial group Banorte – along with a controversial new name: Estadio Banorte.

FIFA regulations mean the stadium will be referred to as "Estadio Ciudad de Mexico" during the World Cup, yet the rebranding has sparked a fierce backlash from some fans, who view it as sacrificing football heritage for commercial interests.

HARSH REALITY

The backlash over the stadium's new name represents only one facet of the mounting tensions. Box and suite holders – some with relationships spanning decades – have threatened legal action after FIFA announced it would commandeer their seats during the tournament, overriding established contracts.

One member of the Mexican Association of Box Holders has already filed a legal challenge to defend access rights.

Beyond the stadium walls, frustration runs equally deep. Residents of Santa Ursula and surrounding neighbourhoods fear that promised infrastructure improvements like pedestrian bridges and transit lines will fail to address fundamental issues including inadequate lighting, water shortages and persistent traffic congestion.

"We're not the stadium's backyard," one local resident told Expansion Politica. "But we're always treated that way."

Dikko hails President Tinubu's bold move, backs Shuaibu to transform NIS into sports PowerHouse

The Chairman of the National Sports Commission (NSC), Mallam Shehu Dikko, has lauded President Bola Ahmed Tinubu GCFR for what he described as a "bold, strategic, and visionary appointment" of His Excellency Comr. Philip Shuaibu as the new Director-General of the National Institute for Sports (NIS).

Speaking at the NSC Headquarters in Abuja while officially receiving Comr. Shuaibu on his resumption visit, Dikko did not mince words in praising the President for prioritizing sports development as a key pillar of the Renewed Hope Agenda.

He described Shuaibu's appointment as "a turning point in the journey to reset, reform, and relaunch Nigerian sports.

"I must thank most sincerely President Bola Ahmed Tinubu GCFR for once again taking the road less traveled with this appointment. This is one of the decisions that will truly support the ongoing reforms in the sports sector," Dikko said.

MALLAM SHEHU DIKKO AND COMR. PHILIP SHUAIBU

He emphasized the crucial role the NIS will play in providing technical depth, research capabilities, and manpower to drive the Commission's ambitious sporting agenda.

"The NIS is key to our vision in the Commission. We are doing things differently—because only mad men do the same thing and expect different results," he stated, drawing applause from staff and stakeholders present.

Dikko described Comr. Shuaibu as a "trusted hand" who has proven himself across various national assignments, now being strategically positioned to overhaul and reposition the NIS in line with 21st-century sporting standards.

"Mr. President has chosen three good friends to hold three critical positions to turn around sports in Nigeria. Comr. Shuaibu's pedigree speaks for itself, and I am confident he will deliver beyond expectations," he added.

FC Porto names Zaidu Sanusi in squad for Club World Cup

Nigerian international Zaidu Sanusi has been selected as part of FC Porto's squad for the inaugural FIFA Club World Cup, BSNSports.com.ng reports.

Sanusi endured a difficult season with limited appearances after suffering a cruciate ligament injury that kept him out for nearly eight months.

Despite his struggles, the 27-year-old defender remains on Porto's roster for the prestigious tournament.

With speculation linking him to a potential summer exit in search of regular playing time, the Club World Cup—set to take place in the United States—offers Sanusi an opportunity to showcase his talents to potential suitors.

The left-back, who still has two years remaining on his contract, will be part of Porto's campaign as they face Inter Miami, Brazil's Palmeiras, and Egypt's Al Ahly in the group stage.

ZAIDU SANUSI

India Challenges Nigeria For 2030 Commonwealth Games Hosting Rights

India has emerged as Nigeria's main competitor in the race to host the 2030 Commonwealth Games, BSNSports.com.ng reports.

The Nigeria Olympic Committee (NOC) recently confirmed that it met the March 28, 2025 deadline to submit its expression of interest to host the Games.

Meanwhile, India has officially entered the race, submitting a bid to host the event in Ahmedabad—a strategic move aligned with its ambition to bring the 2036 Olympic Games to the same city.

Nigeria previously lost out in its attempt to host the 2014 Commonwealth Games, which were eventually awarded to Glasgow, Scotland.

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