By Jejje Muhamudu;

Concerns surrounding the coronavirus have forced the postponement of the inaugural Basketball Africa League season, which was to start later this month in Dakar, Senegal.

The virus, COVID-19, has been found in four of those countries so far: Tunisia, Morocco, Senegal and Nigeria. The first confirmed case in Senegal was announced just this week, and with the first BAL games to be played there, the league had little choice but to call off plans to play.

“Following the recommendation of the Senegalese government regarding the escalating health concerns related to the coronavirus, the BAL’s inaugural season will be postponed,” Basketball Africa League President Amadou Gallo Fall said. “I am disappointed we are not able to tip off this historic league as scheduled.”

Fall’s statement only said the league would be launched “at a later date.”

Fears over the virus have wreaked havoc on countless sporting events around the globe, some canceled altogether, others being played with no fans present.

It has prompted concerns that the Tokyo Olympics will not be held as planned this summer, though officials have stressed that the games are still slated to go on — for now.

The news of the African league’s postponement came one day after the NBA told players to avoid high-fiving fans and strangers and avoid taking any item for autographs, the league’s latest response in its ongoing monitoring of the viral outbreak.

The league, in a memo sent to teams on Sunday offered 10 recommendations to players with hopes of decreasing risks of getting the virus — among them, not taking items such as pens, markers, balls and jerseys from autograph seekers.

Worldwide, more than 92,000 people have been infected and over 3,100 have died, the vast majority of them in China. The number of countries hit by the virus exceeded 70 on Tuesday, and nine patients in the U.S. — all from Washington state — have died because of the virus.

The NBA-backed league was to bring together teams that qualified from a dozen

African nations: The clubs are: Groupement Sportif des Pétroliers (Algeria), Petro de Luanda (Angola), Forces Armées et Police (Cameroon), Zamalek (Egypt), Gendarmerie Nationale Basketball Club (Madagascar), AS Police (Mali), AS Salé (Morocco), Ferroviário de Maputo (Mozambique), Rivers Hoopers BC (Nigeria), Patriots BC (Rwanda), AS Douanes (Senegal) and Union Sportive Monastirienne (Tunisia).

Plans called for the 12 teams to be divided into two conferences, with each conference playing in three cities. Each team was to play five games in the regular season, all in-conference. The top four teams in each conference would have qualified for single-elimination playoffs in Kigali, Rwanda.