



WE PLAYED THE DAY-NIGHT TEST HERE AND WERE PRETTY HAPPY WITH HOW IT WENT. It's become a very exciting feature of an Test series, so we are absolutely open to play a day-night Test," Kohli told reporters in Mumbai.

Jofra Archer abuser banned for two years in NZ



LONDON: The man who racially abused England bowler Jofra Archer during a Test against the Black Caps was banned from Tuesday from international and domestic matches in New Zealand for two years.

Archer was targeted by racial abuse on the final day of the first Test between England and New Zealand in November.

Police tracked down a 28-year-old Auckland man who admitted responsibility for the abuse and was issued with a verbal warning for using insulting language, New Zealand Cricket spokesman Anthony Crummy said.

Crummy said the man has been banned from all international and domestic fixtures in New Zealand until 2022 and if

he breached the ban he "could face further police action".

"We'd again like to extend our apologies to Jofra and the England team management for such an unsavoury incident and reiterate once more that this type of behaviour is completely unacceptable," Crummy said.

"We want to thank the police for their efforts in identifying the person responsible, and for making it clear that this type of behaviour will not be minimised."

The Barbados-born bowler tweeted after the match it was "a bit disturbing hearing racial insults today whilst battling to help save my team".

The 24-year-old said the abuser was a solitary spectator making comments "about the colour of my skin".

Barcelona sack Valverde and appoint Setien as successor



agreement to terminate the contract that united both parties," read a club statement released on Monday night.

Setien will be presented in a press conference at Camp Nou at 2.30pm local time (1330 GMT) on Tuesday.

"Barcelona and Quique Setien have reached an agreement for the latter to become first team coach until 30 June 2022," the club said.

"Setien is one of the most experienced coaches in Spanish football," it added. "Throughout his career he has been a proponent of possession based, attacking football that has been attractive to the fans."

LONDON: Spanish champions Barcelona have sacked their coach Ernesto Valverde and appointed Quique Setien as his replacement, the club announced on Monday.

The decision to remove Valverde was confirmed following a board meeting that lasted more than four hours at Camp Nou on Monday afternoon.

Barca are top of La Liga but have won only one of their last five matches. Valverde is the first coach the club has sacked mid-season since Louis van Gaal in 2003.

"FC Barcelona and Ernesto Valverde have reached an

His first game in charge will be at home to Granada on Sunday. Barcelona play Napoli in the last 16 of the Champions League next month and Real Madrid in the league at the start of March. Setien has made no secret of his admiration for the stylistic traditions of Barcelona, with the 61-year-old also renowned for favouring an exciting, offensive mode of football.

A former player of Atletico Madrid and Racing Santander, he was circled as a potential Barca coach during a particularly successful period in charge of Real Betis.



NEROCA Register 1-0 Victory Over Real Kashmir

NeroCA - 1
(Boubacar Diarra 62')
Real Kashmir - 0

IMPHAL: NEROCA FC registered a hard-fought 1-0 victory over Real Kashmir FC at the Khuman Lumpak Stadium on Tuesday, January 14. Boubacar Diarra scored the winner of the match in the 62nd minute.

NEROCA FC head coach Gift Raikhan, seemingly desperate for a change in fortune, made a catalogue of changes to his line-up. Dhananjay Singh and Roshan Singh were named to start at the back, while Imran Khan and Siam Hanghal formed the pivot in the midfield. Varun Thokchom and Pritam Singh started on the flanks, with Boubacar Diarra and Zico Sekle spearheading the attack.

David Robertson made just a solitary change to his side, with Farhan Ganie starting ahead of Altamash Sayed, with the remainder of his 4-5-1 remaining unchanged.

NeroCA kicked-off the proceedings, looking to draw first blood and in the sev-

enth minute, came close to doing so, when a Siam Hanghal set-piece on the right flank wasn't dealt with properly inside the box, which allowed Taryk Sampson with a crack on goal on the edge of the six-yard area, but the young defender failed to keep his composure and fired wide, much to Kashmir goalkeeper Tempa Lachenpa's relief.

It was Hanghal again, in the 10th minute when he crafted an inch-perfect cross into the box for Diarra, who had a free header on goal from barely a couple of yards out, but he missed an absolute sitter, letting Kashmir off the hook once again.

The visitors had their first attempt on goal in the 17th minute, when a scramble in the NeroCA box led to the ball falling to Gnohere Krizo, who pulled the trigger from point-blank range, but NeroCA were bailed by a stunning save from their skipper, Marvin Devon Phillip. Real Kashmir

had another golden opportunity in the 34th minute when a Mason Robertson delivery found Krizo unmarked, but the chance went begging as he headed over the bar, with the goal gaping wide. Gift Raikhan's men had another chance to break the deadlock, this time in the first minute of first-half stoppage time, when Diarra was through on goal and with only the keeper to beat, fired his shot straight at him, leaving the two teams level pegging at the break. The Snow Leopards came out in the second half with more intent and had the better of the opening exchanges, which led to them coming close yet again, with Krizo in the mix yet again, who did well to get to the end of a Kallum Higginbotham cross and forced Devon Phillip into making an outstanding fingertip save. However, it was NeroCA who broke the deadlock in the 62nd minute, when a Pritam Singh cross was replied to

with a looping header from Diarra, which left Lachenpa backpedalling and helpless as the Khuman Lumpak stadium erupted in celebration.

David Robertson's side kept pushing hard and kept threatening through set-pieces. In the 81st minute, Mason Robertson showed his athletic prowess and pulled off a diving header which would make any forward proud, to get to a Higginbotham corner, but Devon Phillip wasn't in any mood to let anything past him, pulling off yet another stunning save. The referee blew for full-time, as NeroCA registered their second win of the campaign, climbing to sixth in the table with eight points, while Real Kashmir's woes continue on the road, dropping to tenth with six points.

Courtesy of his outstanding display between the sticks, NeroCA skipper and custodian Marvin Devon Phillip was adjudged to be the Hero of the Match.

Kohli open to day-night Test at Gabba or Perth



NEW DELHI: India skipper Virat Kohli said Monday that his side are ready to play a day-night Test at Australia's formidable Gabba ground or in Perth when they tour Down Under later this year.

Kohli's men played their first day-night Test in Kolkata last year, thrashing Bangladesh in just over two days, and are set to take on Australia in a three-match one-day series starting Tuesday in Mumbai.

Australia have pushed for more day-night Tests and face the hosts again later in the year, with a four-match series starting at the Gabba in Brisbane. India had knocked back overtures to play the format in Adelaide at the end of 2018, but Kohli now appears more at ease with

pink ball cricket.

"We played the day-night Test here and were pretty happy with how it went. It's become a very exciting feature of any Test series, so we are absolutely open to play a day-night Test," Kohli told reporters in Mumbai.

"We are ready and up for the challenge. Whether it's Gabba or Perth, doesn't matter to us. We do have the skill sets as a team now to compete against anyone in the world anywhere. In any format of the game, whether it's white ball, red ball, pink ball."

India are looking to sharpen their act ahead of the T20 World Cup in October, and the three ODI matches at home will be a key part of the preparation.

Iran's Alizadeh training in Dutch city after defecting: coach

TEHRAN: Iran's only female Olympic medalist Kimia Alizadeh is in the Dutch city of Eindhoven where the taekwondo athlete is training for this year's Tokyo Olympics after permanently leaving her country, her new coach confirmed on Monday.

Alizadeh, 21, who announced her defection on Instagram over the weekend "has been training with us since December 18," Mirmoun El Boujoui said.

"She arrived in the Netherlands on a visa accompanied by her husband," Boujoui, a taekwondo coach in the southern Dutch city, told AFP.

Alizadeh won a bronze medal at the 2016 Rio Olympics, drawing praise from her compatriots including Iran's President Hassan Rouhani and even conservatives in the Islamic Republic.

In keeping with Iran's strict Muslim custom, Alizadeh, then 18, competed wearing a headscarf over her taekwondo uniform and protective gear.

But she announced her permanent departure from Iran citing the "hypocrisy" of a system that she claimed humiliated athletes while using them for political ends.

"Should I start with hello, goodbye, or condolences?" she wrote on Instagram as Iran was reeling from Wednesday's accidental downing of a Ukrainian airliner that killed all 176 people on board.

Criticising Iran's political system for "hypocrisy", "lying", "injustice" and "flattery", she said



she wanted nothing more than "taekwondo, security and a happy and healthy life."

Boujoui said it was Alizadeh who had approached him about joining the group.

"She is world famous in taekwondo. It's a great motivation for the group. She feels good here," Boujoui said.

Alizadeh is not intending to compete for Iran at the Tokyo Olympics and is looking for another country to represent.

However if Alizadeh wanted to represent the Netherlands "she would have to apply for asylum here, a long and complicated procedure," the coach said.

"She first wants to get her bearings before thinking about what to do next," Boujoui added.

For now she was training every day at the Eindhoven Taekwondo Club and was shunning any media attention.

"She left everything and left her family in Iran. The situation is very difficult for her.

SANIA MARKS RETURN TO TENNIS WITH VICTORY

HOBART: India's former doubles world number one Sania Mirza made a winning return to tennis Tuesday at the Hobart International after more than two years on maternity leave.

The 33-year-old last played at the China Open in October 2017 before injuries and then the birth of son Izhaan in October 2018 meant an extended spell on the sidelines.

Mirza, who is married to the former Pakistan cricket captain Shoaib Malik, partnered

Ukraine's Nadiia Kichenok to a 2-6, 7-6 (7/3), 10-3 victory over Georgia's Oksana Kalashnikova and Japan's Miyu Kato in the doubles.

"Today was one of the most special days of my life to have my parents and my little baby boy with me in my first match after so long... and we WON our first round," Mirza tweeted after her win. "Feel very grateful for the love I am receiving.. BELIEF!! Takes you places YES my baby

boy, we did it." Mirza, regarded as her country's greatest women's tennis player, became the first Indian to win a WTA singles title in 2005.

She reached the fourth round of the US Open in the same year, and by 2007 was among the women's top 30.

But a wrist injury caused her to concentrate on doubles, forging a partnership with Swiss great Martina Hingis which produced three Grand Slam titles.

