

'Absolute urgency': Kohli urges action on racial abuse allegations

By Chris Barrett and Tom Decent
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India have called on authorities to use "an iron fist" in dealing with claims that fast bowler Mohammed Siraj was racially abused at the SCG as Cricket Australia and NSW Police launched investigations into fresh allegations on Sunday night.

Less than 24 hours after the Indians reported that Siraj and fellow seamer Jasprit Bumrah had been the targets of racial slurs from drunk spectators on day three of the third Test, play stopped before tea on Sunday after Siraj reported more abuse to umpires Paul Wilson and Paul Reiffel.



Police speak to spectators following a complaint from Mohammed Siraj of India that stopped play.

Police escorted six spectators from their seats while Getty Images also photographed another man from the same row of seats leaving quickly up the stairwell when Siraj approached the umpires.

India have complained the comments from the crowd were of a racial nature and abuse of players had "been a continual thing at Sydney".

"They have been quite nasty and hurling abuse," spin bowler Ravichandran Ashwin said. "There is a time where they have gone one step ahead and used racial abuses.

"It is definitely not acceptable in this day and age. We've evolved as a society and ... this must be dealt with an iron fist and make sure it doesn't happen again."

The Sydney Cricket test has been dragged into a second day of drama with Indian players making allegations of racial abuse against members of the crowd. On his fourth Test tour of Australia, Ashwin said he had "personally experienced it as well".

"I take myself back to my first tour in 2011-12, I had no clue about racial abuse and how you can be made to feel small in front of so many people. And the people actually laugh at you when you get abused," he said.

"They do tend to get nasty, I don't know for what reason. Until it is dealt with people don't find it necessary to look at it in a different way. I was quite surprised that some sections of the crowd continually did it and there were not mates around them to pull them up."

Prominent Indian sports journalist Boria Majumdar reported Siraj was called a "brown dog" on Sunday.

Absent India captain Virat Kohli tweeted on Sunday night: "Racial abuse is absolutely unacceptable. Having gone through many incidents of really pathetic things said on the boundary lines, this is the absolute peak of rowdy behaviour. It's sad to see this happen on the field.

"The incident needs to be looked at with absolute urgency and seriousness and strict action against the offenders should set things straight for once."

Australia captain Tim Paine, who was batting with all-rounder Cameron Green at the time, had joined the Indians where they were assembled at the middle of the ground, with Siraj pointing towards the alleged culprits in the lower tier of the Clive Churchill and Brewongle Stands.

The men escorted by police had been seated in the same area of the grandstand from which Siraj and Bumrah reported the abuse had come on Saturday.

Spectator Rishi Aryan, who was seated in the same bay, told the *Herald* and *The Age* on Sunday: "All these boys were doing is a bit of sledging of the player on the outfield. First it was Bumrah then they had a sledge against Siraj. They kept calling him Shiraz and all that crap. Next thing you know they said: 'Welcome to Sydney, Siraj' and then he got the shits. That was literally it. Then he walked off.



Police speak with a member of the Indian team staff on Sunday

“I don’t know why [the police kicked the men out]. Next thing you know you see police everywhere. It didn’t make sense. It was confusing.”

Another spectator with his family believed there was nothing racist said. He also corroborated Mr Aryan’s statement that the phrase “Welcome to Sydney, Siraj” was used.

A source with knowledge of investigations of the weekend incidents said crowd members in that section had been singing the song *Que Sera, Sera* using Siraj’s name. Australia coach Justin Langer on Sunday night slammed the abuse of players from the crowd as “upsetting and disappointing” . “Anyone who knows me, I’ve said for years it’s just one of my greatest pet hates in life that people think they can come to a sporting event, whether it’s cricket or any code, and pay their money and think they can abuse or say whatever they like,” he said.



Paul Reiffel and Paul Wilson speak to the Indian players before tea.

"We've seen it in different parts of the world and it's really sad to see it happen in Australia. I think our series so far has been played in such great spirits. It's a shame to see it getting marred by incidents like we're hearing about today and last night".

Acting Prime Minister Michael McCormack said on Sunday: "If racist remarks have been made, then the appropriate action has taken place.

"There is no place for racism in Australia. We are a tolerant country and the most successful multicultural nation in the world. Australia's performance in this Test so far has been very solid – the team won't be distracted by this as it pushes on to victory."

NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian said if reports of racial abuse were correct "those comments should be utterly condemned".

"They are un-Australian and don't represent who we are," she said.

CA head of integrity and security said the Indian team's allegations would be "investigated to their fullest extent".

"The abuse of cricketers by crowd members is not acceptable," Carroll said. "We thank the Indian team for their vigilance in reporting today's incident, which we are now in the process of investigating.

"A number of spectators were interviewed by NSW Police and subsequently removed from the SCG on Sunday afternoon. While we await the outcome of the investigation by NSW Police, CA has launched its own inquiry into the matter."