

## 64 Killed As Fire Engulfs Russia Mall



This picture distributed by the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation shows the scorched interior of the multi-story shopping center in the Siberian city of Kemerovo. - via AP

MOSCOW: At least 64 people, including many children, perished in the Siberian city of Kemerovo as a massive fire engulfed a crowded shopping mall where there was no alarm and the fire exits had been blocked, the Russian authorities said on Monday.

The inferno ripped through the top floor of the four-storey Winter Cherry commercial complex, which included a three-screen cinema complex, a skating rink and an entertainment centre for children, on Sunday afternoon in Kemerovo, located in southern Siberia around 3,000 km east of Moscow. Many of the victims were children as the mall's shops, cinema and bowling alley were packed due to school holidays. At least 16 people were still missing

and many others were hospitalised, the Russian media reported.

A video on social media showed plumes of smoke billowing from the mall's roof and windows. Other videos showed people jumping from windows to escape the flames and smoke. According to one official, the temperatures within the mall at the time had reached 700 degrees Celsius, the RBC news outlet reported. The fire engulfed a children's trampoline room and a cinema hall on the fourth floor.

Russia's Investigative Committee (ICR) in a statement said it had opened a criminal investigation into the cause of the fire. It said a fire safety technician at the complex "switched off the alarm system" after being alerted about the fire.

## 13 Die In Pakistan Tragedies

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani officials say 13 people have died in two incidents - a landslide in a northern region and a roof collapse at a warehouse in the south.

Mohammad Tariq, a deputy administrator in the northern Dinaur district, says six perished under a landslide that took place near the village of Fugage.

Villagers were clearing mud and bricks on Wednesday on a road in the mountainous area from an overnight landslide when a second landslide was set off, killing six of them and injuring a seventh man. In the southern city of Sukkur, a warehouse roof caved in on Wednesday, burying about 40 workers. Seven died.

## Smith, Warner Banned From Cricket For 12 Months

JOHANNESBURG: Australian cricket captain Steve Smith and vice-captain David Warner were banned for 12 months on Wednesday after an investigation into the team's cheating scandal identified Warner as the instigator of the ball tampering plan that unraveled in South Africa.

Cricket Australia said Warner "instructed" young batsman Cameron Bancroft to carry out the tampering on the field with a piece of sandpaper - even showed Bancroft how to do it - then misled match officials and tried to cover up his role in the cheating.

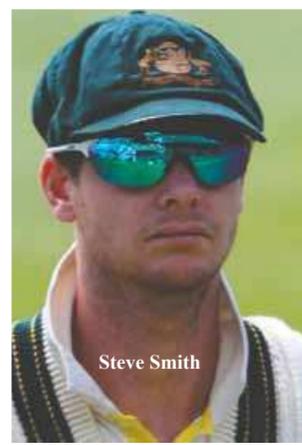
Smith, the top test batsman in the world and the star of Australian cricket, knew about the plan. But the captain failed "to take steps to seek to prevent the development and implementation of that plan," Cricket Australia said as it released the findings of the investigation by its head of integrity that dragged in all the players, coaches and backroom staff for questioning.

Smith and Warner were banned from playing for Australia, or any high-level cricket in Australia, for a year. Bancroft, maybe because he's an impressionable newcomer in the team, received a nine-month ban.

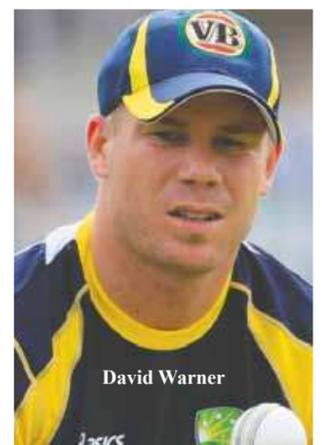
The 28-year-old Smith will not be allowed to captain Australia for two years and Warner will never be allowed to hold a leadership position in Australian cricket again. At 31, Warner may never play for Australia again.

The fallout extended beyond Australia. The three players were also all banned for the 2018 edition of the Indian Premier League, denying them places in the lucrative Twenty20 tournament where players are paid big money to appear.

"These are significant penalties for professional players and the (Cricket Australia) board does



Steve Smith



David Warner

not impose them lightly," CA chairman David Peever said. "It is hoped that following a period of suspension, the players will be able to return to playing the game they love and eventually rebuild their careers."

All three were encouraged by national administrators to play low-level club cricket during their bans in an attempt to rebuild trust with the Australian public.

In terms of Smith's future captaincy prospects, CA said that "would be conditional on acceptance by fans and the public."

Underlining the extent of the damage to Australia's reputation, the Cricket Australia bans were far more serious than punishments handed out by the International Cricket Council. The ICC banned Smith for one test, gave Bancroft disciplinary demerit points but no ban at all, and didn't even charge Warner with any offence following the tampering episode in the third test last weekend.

That led some to argue that CA had gone too far in their punishments for an offence that has happened multiple times before in cricket.

"We are all so hurt and angry and maybe we weren't so sure how to react. We'd just never

seen it before," Australia great Shane Warner, one of the best bowlers the game has seen, wrote on his social media accounts.

"But the jump to hysteria is something that has elevated the offence beyond what they actually did, and maybe we're at a point where the punishment just might not fit the crime."

Smith's fall from grace was sudden and steep after he captained Australia to a 4-0 Ashes rout of England a few months ago, establishing himself as the best batsman in the world with a series of outstanding performances. Now, he's an outcast in his sport, only allowed to play club cricket. As he left the team hotel in Johannesburg, Smith told the Associated Press he didn't feel like playing any cricket right now.

Wearing a white T-shirt and dark baseball cap, Smith hugged teammate Tim Paine, who has replaced him as Australia's test captain, before he headed for the airport. Coach Darren Lehmann, who was cleared of having any knowledge of the tampering plan, was part of a small group of players and backroom staff to see him off. Smith was later escorted by police into Johannesburg's international airport.

## China Promises Action On Big Trade Surplus

NEW DELHI: China on Monday promised to address the issue of its massive trade surplus with India and work towards a more balanced trade relationship, while urging greater focus on the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) negotiations at a time of increasing protectionist trends globally.

This was stated in an Indian Commerce Ministry release following the 11th meeting here of the India-China Joint Group on Economic Relations, Trade, Science and Technology co-chaired by Indian Commerce Minister Suresh Prabhu and his Chinese counterpart Zhong Shan.

"Chinese Minister Zhong Shan welcomed Indian investment in China and promised to address the trade deficit between the two countries.

"Issues discussed included two-way trade relations, preparation of an action plan, greater focus on Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership and dialogue," the statement said. India's trade deficit with China has been growing in recent years and stood at over \$51 billion in 2016-17. Prabhu exhorted his Chinese counterpart for greater market access for Indian agricultural products like rapeseed, soyabean, basmati and non-basmati rice, fruits, vegetables and sugar.

"Another commodity which could be exported from India to China is high quality pharmaceutical products. Export of India's IT and IT Enabled Services (ITES) to China and cooperation in the sectors of tourism and healthcare needs to be focussed on," it said.

The India-China Joint Economic Group meeting and China's call on RCEP comes in the backdrop of growing protectionism in the US under President Donald Trump.



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