



Tourists enjoying a Shikara ride in the Dal Lake in Srinagar on Monday

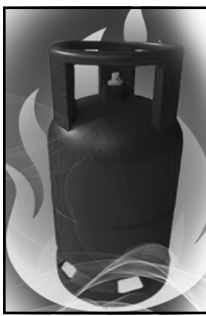
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Subsidised LPG cylinder's price to go up by Rs 4 per month

NEW DELHI, July 31 /- The Union government has ordered state-run oil companies to raise subsidised cooking gas (LPG) prices by Rs 4 per cylinder every month to eliminate all the subsidies by March next year. Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said today. The government had previously asked Indian Oil (IOC), Bharat Petroleum (BPL) and Hindustan Petroleum (HPCL) to raise rates of subsidised domestic LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) by Rs 2 per 14.2-kg cylinder per month (excluding VAT). Now, the quantum has been doubled so as to bring down the subsidy to nil, he said in a written reply in the Lok Sabha here. Every household is entitled to 12 cylinders of 14.2-kg each at subsidised rates in a year. Any requirement beyond that is to be purchased at market price. "Public sector oil marketing companies (OMCs) were authorised to increase price of subsidised domestic LPG cylinder by Rs 2 per cylinder (14.2 kg) per month (excluding VAT) with effect from July 1, 2016," he said. Oil companies had hiked LPG rates on 10 occasions since that go-ahead. "The government vide its order dated May 30, 2017, has again authorised OMCs to continue to in-



The government... has again authorised OMCs to continue to increase the effective price of subsidised domestic LPG by Rs 4 per cylinder effective June 1, 2017, per month (excluding VAT) till the reduction of government subsidy to nil, or till March 2018, or till further orders, whichever is earliest

crease the effective price of subsidised domestic LPG by Rs 4 per cylinder effective June 1, 2017, per month (excluding VAT) till the reduction of government subsidy to nil, or till March 2018, or till further orders, whichever is earliest," he said. Oil companies have raised rates twice since then, the last being on July 1 when rates were up by a steep Rs 32 per cylinder -- the steepest increase in six years. This hike was because of the May 30 order as well as reflection of hiked tax rates under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime. Subsidised LPG now costs Rs 477.46 per 14.2-kg cylinder in Delhi. It was priced at Rs 419.18 in June last year. The rate of non-subsidised LPG, which consumers pay after exhausting their quota of below-market priced bottles, costs Rs 564. "The price for the other subsidised cylinders (i.e. 5 kg) would be increased proportionately by the OMCs," Pradhan said. The subsidy on LPG was Rs 86.54 per cylinder for July, he said. There are as many as 18.11 crore customers of subsidised LPG in the country. These include 2.5 crore poor women who were given free connections during the last one year under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana. There are another 2.66 crore users of non-subsidised cooking gas.

Mamata criticises decision

KOLKATA, July 31 /- West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee today criticised the Union government's decision to raise prices of subsidised cooking gas (LPG) every month to eliminate all subsidies, saying the BJP "only care for money". The Trinamool Congress (TMC) supremo accused



the BJP of deviating from its commitments it had made to the public and alleged that the saffron party does not care about the people. "The BJP makes public commitments and then deviates from all. They only care about money," Mamata wrote on her Twitter handle this afternoon. Questioning the BJP's commitment to the society, she wrote: "How can the BJP not carry out their social obligations? Where is their commitment to society at large? I am really concerned about the common people. The subsidy was withdrawn on LPG and now again, BJP does not care about the people," she added.



Firefighters dousing fire that gutted two shops in siliguri — EOI Photo

GJM gives 10-day limit to Centre to intervene

DARJEELING, July 31 /- The Gorkha Janamukti Morcha (GJM) has given a 10-day deadline to the Centre to intervene in the Gorkhaland statehood stir as the indefinite shutdown in the hills entered its 47th day today. "We have given a ten-day deadline to the Union government to intervene. An indefinite shutdown is going on for the last 47 days. The Centre can't just sit idle when the hills are burning," GJM assistant general secretary Binay Tamang told newsmen on Sunday night. The 30-member Gorkhaland Movement Coordination Committee (CMCC), a body of all the hill parties of Darjeeling, is in Delhi for an all-party meeting. The CMCC has sought an appointment with Union Home Minister Pradhan to brief him on the ongoing crisis in the hills. "We have sought a meeting with Union home minister Rajnath Singh in order to brief him on the ongoing crisis in the hills. The indefinite shutdown has entered its 47th day, which is the longest-ever shutdown in the history of Darjeeling. The Centre needs to take concrete action," Bharatiya Gorkha Parisangh president Sukhman Moktan told news agency PTL. The police and security forces patrolled the streets of the hills and kept a tight vigil at all entry and exit routes. Normal life remained crippled during the indefinite strike to press for a separate Gorkhaland state. Barring medicine shops, business establishments, restaurants, hotels, schools

and colleges remained closed. The issue of unrest in Darjeeling over demand for Gorkhaland today figured in the Parliament with an NCP member in Rajya Sabha asking the government to call the agitators for talks to restore normalcy in the picturesque hill station and the affected region. Raising the issue during the Zero Hour in the House, Majeed Memon said the agitation for a separate Gorkhaland by Gorkha Janamukti Morcha (GJM) has taken a violent turn and has been going on for almost eight weeks. He said the people were suffering due to shortage of essential items like water and food. Due to the prolonged agitation, it is for the first time in 150 years that Darjeeling tea has not come to the markets for auction. Gorkha Janamukti Morcha (GJM), which is spearheading an agitation in Darjeeling hills, is demanding a separate Gorkhaland state. "It is felt that the agitation that is going on for whatever demand, may be justified or may not be justified...the ruling party in West Bengal probably is not in good terms with the Centre and it is because of the hostility between the two, the Centre and the state...the people are sandwiched, they are suffering," he said. Memon urged the government to call the agitators for talks so that normalcy could be restored in the region. "Well, you may or may not accept their demand...please invite the agitators and have a talk so that normalcy can be restored," the NCP member said.

Chinese Army enters disputed stretch along border in Uttarakhand's Chamoli

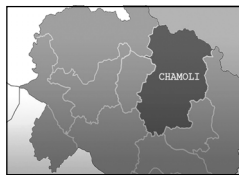
■ Not so unusual movement, says ITBP

NEW DELHI, July 31 /- Amid the military stand-off in Doklam, the Chinese troops recently entered a disputed stretch along the international border with India.

The alleged incursion took place on July 25 at Barahoti in Chamoli district, Uttarakhand. The transgression took place on the morning of July 25 when a group of shepherds was asked to vacate the land by troops of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), officials in the know said on the condition of anonymity. The incident comes in the backdrop of a prolonged stand-off between Chinese and Indian troops at Doklam near Sikkim, Barahoti, an 80 sq km sloping pasture about 140 km from the Uttarakhand capital Dehradun, is one of three border posts in what is known the 'middle sector', comprising Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. It is a demilitarised zone where Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) jawans are not allowed to take their weapons, officials said. In 1958, India and China listed Barahoti as a disputed area where neither side would send their troops. In the 1962 war, the PLA did not enter the middle sector and focused on the western (Ladakh) and eastern (Arunachal Pradesh) sectors.

After the war, ITBP jawans would patrol the area with weapons in a non-combatative manner -- with the barrel of the gun facing down. During negotiations on resolving the border dispute, the Indian side

unilaterally agreed in June 2000 that ITBP troops would not carry arms in three posts, Barahoti and Kauril and Shipki in Himachal Pradesh. ITBP men go patrolling in civil dress and the Barahoti pasture sees Indian shepherds from border villages tending their sheep and people from Tibet bringing their



recently at loggerheads over Doklam plateau in Bhutan. The military tension over the Himalayan tri-junction between the two countries that share a 3,500-km boundary started in June when Indian troops in Chamoli district started building a road at the stretch where India and China connect with Bhutan. The stand-off has hit India-China ties with Chinese experts threatening a war if New Delhi did not buckle. Former foreign secretary Shyam Saran had on last Thursday called the month-long military stand-off between India and China at Doklam part of a mind game. He added that there was a possibility of a prolonged impasse. Citing the report, Uttarakhand chief minister Harish Rawat had on July 27 termed the development as "something to worry about" hoping that Centre will pay heed to his request for increased vigil. Union minister for state for home Kiren Rijiju said ITBP had been asked to look into the matter. "Soldiers of the Chinese Army come into our area and leave after staying there for a while. It has been happening for decades. Though we can't call it routine it is not so unusual movement either," said a senior ITBP official on the condition of anonymity. It is a "demilitarised zone" where Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) jawans are not allowed to take their weapons, officials said.

Patna HC dismisses pleas against formation of new Bihar govt

PATNA, July 31 /- The Patna High Court today dismissed two petitions challenging formation of the new government by Nitish Kumar's JD-U along with the BJP, saying no intervention of the court is required after floor test in the state Assembly. The two PILs had challenged the formation of the new government on the ground that it had violated the judgement in the S R Bommal case. After hearing all parties, a division bench

comprising Chief Justice Rajendra Menon and Justice A K Upadhyay dismissed the two PILs saying, after floor test in the state Assembly, no intervention of the court is required. While one PIL was filed by RJD MLAs Saroj Yadav and Chandan Verma, the second PIL was filed by Jitendra Kumar who is a member of the Samajwadi Party. On Friday last, the court had adjourned the matter for today. The new Nitish Kumar government, in which NDA is a coalition partner, had comfortably won the trust vote on Friday last. While the ruling alliance got 131 votes, the opposition had secured 108 votes in the vote of confidence. B C Pandey and Bhupendra Kumar Singh, lawyers on behalf of the petitioners, argued before the court that RJD, the single largest party, was not

given a chance for government formation in violation of the Supreme Court judgement in the S R Bommal case and hence the oath of office and secrecy taken by ministers of the new government should be cancelled. While Advocate General Lalit Kishore appeared on behalf of the state government, Y V Giri was the governor's counsel and the Union government was represented by S D Sanjay

1 Cong, 5 TMC candidates elected unopposed to RS from state

KOLKATA, July 31 /- Five TMC candidates and a Congress candidate were elected to the Rajya Sabha unopposed from West Bengal after CPM candidate Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya's nomination was cancelled due to technical reasons. The five TMC candidates elected to the Rajya Sabha are Manas Bhunia, TMC's chief national spokesperson Derek O'Brien, Sukhendu Sekhar Roy, Dola Sen and Santa Chetri. Congress candidate Pradip Bhattacharya was also elected to the Upper House. Bhattacharya, Roy, O'Brien and Sen were renominated by their respective parties, while Bhunia was the first-timer. "Congratulations to the five @AITC official candidates



Winning Cong and TMC candidates for Rajya Sabha showing victory signs after they were elected unopposed, at the Assembly — Shyamal Maitra

elected today to Rajya Sabha and the sixth supported by us who had switched over to the TMC," chief minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee said in a tweet. Mamata had on Friday extended her party's support to the Congress candidate. The nomination of CPM candidate Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya was rejected on Monday after the returning officer declared it as invalid on the ground that an additional affidavit was submitted after the 3 pm deadline on the last date for filing of papers on July 28 for the August 8 polls to six seats. The governor of Bhattacharya's nomination has kicked off a political debate be-

tween the TMC and CPM, with the latter alleging that it was the "handwork" of the ruling party on the state. "We feel TMC was rattled by his nomination and that is why a conspiracy was hatched to reject his nomination. We will seek legal advice from a p" CPM LP leader Sujan Chakraborty said. Countering Chakraborty's claim, TMC LP leader Partha Chatterjee said, "There is no conspiracy. They are trying to malign the Election Commission. Actually they had a secret understanding with the BJP before nominating a person like Bhattacharya who has never been a part of the Rajya Sabha."

Bengal flood toll rises to 39

KOLKATA, July 31 /- The flood toll in West Bengal rose to 39 today with the death of five more persons even as the situation improved due to less rainfall and the water level of rivers receding. Five more persons have died in the last 24 hours in the flood-hit of the state, a senior official of the state Disaster Management department said here. "Out of the 39 death, 19 died by drowning, three due to electrocution, five each died due of wall-collapse, lightning and snake bite while two after their boat sunk," the officer said. The situation is improving slowly mainly because less water was released from the dams and also less rainfall in the last few days," he added. In the 14 flood-hit districts, around 27 lakh people in 106 blocks were badly affected by the flood. The administration opened around 311 relief camps where over 47 thousand people have taken shelter, the official said. The state government also opened 131 medical camps. "Over 16,000 animals have been given shelter in relief camp for animals and we have our veterinary doctors there so look after those animals."