US government says

Sanctions on India, Pakistan may be lifted soon

WASHINGTON: The US government says sanctions imposed to punish India and Pakistan for testing nuclear weapons may be lifted soon, re-

ports IPS. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, who has been negotiating intensively with senior Indian and Pakistani leaders since the tests were carried out last May, also has stressed that Washington intends to remain even-handed toward both countries.

This is despite the fact that lifting the sanctions will enable Islamabad to obtain multilateral loans which India may

still be denied. In particular, the administration, which expects to re-ceive Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif here next month. will back hundreds of millions of dollars in new loans to Islamabad by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other multilateral agencies to help that country cope with a major financial crisis.

Washington will continue to oppose all non-humanitarian loans by the multilateral banks to India, Talbott said earlier this month.

"Alas, our Pakistani friends are in very dire economic straits." he told an audience at the Brooking Institution here. "Fortunately ... India is not in a comparable crisis. Pakistan

desperately needs help from the IMF; India does not."

"I really do not understand how it can be argued on factual grounds that we are differentiating in a way that is prejudicial to India ... or tilting towards Pakistan," he added.

Talbott stressed that the sanctions were being eased to reward Pakistan and India for progress in easing tensions which rose to dangerous levels after the tests.

The administration imposed sweeping sanctions against the two countries as required by a 1994 law aimed at punishing any "non-nuclear" country which acquires, tests, or exports nuclear weapons. Among other measures, the sanctions required Washington to sus-pend all non-humanitarian aid; oppose multilateral loans to offending nations; cut off all military aid and sales; ban exports of sensitive technology; and ban US trade and investment guarantees and credits.

Clinton imposed the sanctions somewhat reluctantly, arguing that they did not give him the flexibility he needed to encourage the two South Asian rivals, which have gone to war three times since Partition, to reduce tensions and curb their

Backed by US business and agricultural concerns with substantial interests in India and Pakistan, the administration pressed Congress to amend the law precisely to enable Clinton to ease the sanctions in response to positive steps taken by them.

The effort was also supported by a blue-ribbon task force of regional and non-proliferation experts and former senior foreign-policy officials from the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) in New York and the Brookings Institution. "The United States does not have the luxury of disengaging from the region because it disagrees with

the nuclear tests," it said. On the eve of its adjournment for the year, Congress went along with most of the administration's requests, and last week, the White House announced it would ease sanctions "in response the positive steps both countries have taken to address our nonproliferation concerns....

In reviewing those steps Tal-bott stressed that Washington had seen "some progress" towards an agreement by both countries to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). He noted that both countries have declared moratoriums on further testing and that both Sharif and Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vapayee told the United Nations in September that they will

move to adhere to the CTBT within one year.

In addition, both countries have pledged to strengthen controls on the export of nuclear and missile technology and are participating in multilateral talks to halt production of fissile material in Geneva.

The two countries also resumed high-level talks last month on confidence-building measures that could reduce tensions and on the disputed territory of Kashmir, which sparked two of the three wars fought between the two countries in the past 50 years.

While the three-day talks failed to resolve any specific issue. Talbott stressed that they "will not only complement but will eventually supercede the efforts of the United States." Any breakthrough, he added, would likely result in full normalisation of ties with Washington.

In light of the progress so far, the administration will lift its veto on multilateral loans to Pakistan and restore the eligibility of US companies to receive government guarantees and credits for their trade and investment in India, 800 million dollars of which were frozen by the sanctions.

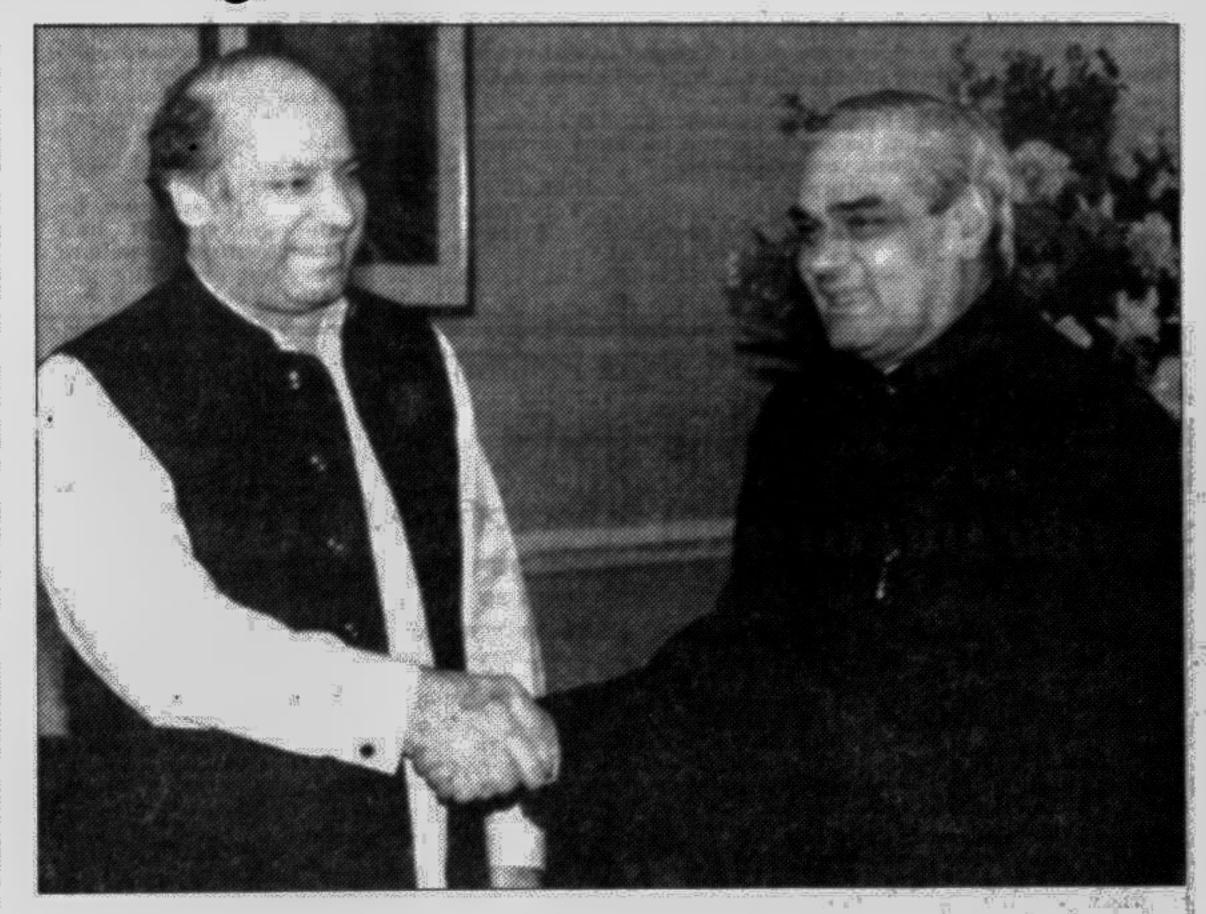
In addition, the administration will waive all restrictions on US private bank lending to the two countries, although US banks have virtually no business in Pakistan. Finally, Washington will restore military training pro-grammes, although it will retain its ban on military sales or sales of any item, such as supercomputers, which has a clear military use.

Talbott, who will meet with his Indian counterpart, Jaswant Singh, in Rome next week and take part in talks with Sharif here in early December, said these measures will take effect "very soon."

"We hope very much that these steps will provide an in-centive for both India and Pakistan to move forward on the non-proliferation agenda during the year ahead," he said, adding that Clinton himself, who had originally intended to visit New Delhi and Islamabad this month, hopes that suffi-cient progress will be made to enable him to travel there dur-

Talbott argued that Indians should not be concerned about Washington's decision to help Pakistan obtain multilateral

"Surely India and all cleareyed Indians realise that it is very much in India's best interest that Pakistan remain on a path of political stability, economic development and integration with the rest of the world." he said.



Nawaz Sharif and Atal Behari Vajpayee, the two prime ministers hit by the US sanctions.

Extrajudicial killings still going Indo-US ties will take time to heal on in Pakistan

By Anees Jillani

ISLAMABAD: Sacking Benazir Bhutto as Pakistan's prime minister exactly one year ago, then president Farooq Leghari said her government had failed to maintain law and order in accordance with the law, says IPS.

The dismissal was upheld by the Supreme Court but nothing was heard again of Leghari's charges that "thousands of persons in Karachi and other parts of Pakistan (who) have been deprived of their right to life .. They have been killed in police encounters and in custody".

No investigations were ordered into the blatant violation of constitutional safeguards (Article 9 says that "no person shall be deprived of life or liberty save in accordance with law.") by either the interim government or Bhutto's successor! present Prime Minister Nawaz

Accused repeatedly of human rights violations by domestic and international rights groups, successive Pakistani governments have pointed to the chapter on fundamental rights in the Constitution in de-

Time and again, the authorities have used trumped up criminal charges against those who have displeased the government particularly journalists and political workers. The charges are kept pending for years to harass opponents into

are alarmed by the loss of free-

dom say the reprieve is at best

Nawaz Sharif made the bill the

main plank of a public speech

in the mountainous northern

areas, where he urged listeners

to "force the Senators into pass-

this unnecessary legislation

has already caused immense

damage and encouraged reli-

gious fanatics to physically

threaten those who have a dif-

ferent world view," says Rubina

Jamil of the Working Women's

hostel's run by the association

in Lahore was threatened by an

extremist religious party, who

pasted notices warning "hostel-

ers ... not (to be) seen walking on

the streets and asked if they had

threatens the Constitution, as

well as the principles of the fed-

eration and provincial auton-

omy, notwithstanding Sharif's

protestations that Pakistan

had made history by ushering

in 'Islamic law' through democ-

racy and not bloodshed, after it

was voted through the ruling

party-controlled National As-

liament in October.

from the Assembly.

League activist.

sembly or lower house of Par-

significant number of absten-

tions to the vote (50), since

members of the treasury cannot

vote against government bills

on pain of disqualification

the house. "But then, why

should it have been given any

hearing at all? The prime min-

ister is known for not consult-

ing even his own party mem-

Nor was the bill debated in

Interestingly there was a

Rights activists say the bill

their burgas stitched yet."

She said that one of the

The very introduction of

Just recently Prime Minister

temporary.

ing the bill."

Association.

Take the case of Dr Rahim Solangi, of the Sindh Taraqi Pasand Party, a small regional party. He was arrested without a warrant in June 1996 and when the Sindh High Court inquired about his whereabouts, the police claimed ignorance.

However, his lawyers told the court that their client was in a local police station, along with 27 others detained without legal authority. The provincial court immediately ordered the police to produce Solangi in

But the police evaded the court order by arresting Solangi on the basis of a blind first information report (FIR) - complaint registered without naming the criminal suspect — used frequently in Pakistan. Again the court ordered his release, but Solangi was rearrested by the police on charges in other

This cat-and-mouse game between the court and the police went on for seven months, and Solangi was bailed out only in January 1997.

In fact, Solangi was lucky to have got out of police clutches. More than 200 people are killed across the country every year in so-called "police encounters" or in custody.

In August 1995, Javed Masih was arrested by the police in Hyderabad. Sindh province, on theft charges. The police banged his head against a ball at the

time of the arrest, and he lost consciousness. In the police station, he was reportedly tortured with a electric shocks and ground red chillies and kerosene were inserted in his anus. He died. The police hung his body in the police station and claimed he had committed

Despite appeals by rights activists, the case was never investigated by the government to ascertain the reason of Masih's

In Pakistan, the police have escaped accountability for extrajudicial deaths. Governments have ignored allegations of rights abuse levelled against the police, seeing it as an unavoidable price paid in combating crime and maintaining law and order.

Inevitable though the victims of police brutality are the powerless and ignorant - the poor, the women and the minorities, whether religious or ethnic — even though Article 25 of the Constitution says that all citizens are equal before the law and are entitled to equal pro-

At times governments have appointed judicial committees and commissions to probe wellpublicised violations but the findings are neither publicised nor is there follow-up action. Failure to investigate and prosecute have given rise to a feeling that the government condones such violations.

Neither has Pakistan ratified international human rights treaties, like the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its first Optional Protocol, and the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

Instead governments have continued with a barbaric regime that ignores reports of torture, deaths in custody, extrajudical executions and disappearances instead of ordering thorough and impartial probes and ensuring those responsible are brought to justice.

Pakistan's high courts have repeatedly asked the jail authorities to stop the cruel practice of keeping prisoners, most of whom are undertrials, in leg shackles which causes swelling and abrasions around the ankles. Even children are not ex-

The prison authorities use the bar letters as a disciplinary Two years ago in February,

Sheikh Rahoo, a 70 year old prisoner, died with his fetters on. The report provoked an uproar, but the Bhutto government dismissed it as an unfortunate incident and justified the practice in Rahoo's case, saying the authorities were worried the old man might try

New Delhi: Even as hopes are being pinned on the Jaswant-Talbott talks, it is unlikely that the dark clouds over Indo-US relations will move away, especially after nuclear tests by In-

The US "policy of softness" towards Pakistan, closer defence and security cooperation with China and hardline position over Pokhran II would pose "considerable hurdles" in restoration of normal ties between the two nations, writes Dr Chintamani Mahapatra in "Indo-US relations into the 21st

dia, says a US watcher, reports

century. "The US approach towards technology transfer, scientific collaboration, Pakistan and China are the key issues that would determine the state of relationship between the two countries," says Dr Mahapatra of the institute for defence studies and analyses (IDSA).

The shape and the nature of the relationship between India and the US are going to be affected by several (post Pokhran II I factors in the coming century," he writes observing that "the China factor" has played an important role in Indo-US relations. There are lovers of China in

the US and there are people affected by sino-Phobia too. Nonetheless, the fact remains that Clinton administration's approach towards China had adverse implications for India. Commenting on the Indo-US

dialogue between Jaswant Singh Strobe Talbott, US dy secretary of state, Mahapatra By Nirendra Dev

says, it is unlikely to cut much ice although "US sanctions against India would have to go sooner or later." "But whether it will be busi-

ness as usual is hard to say, "he says noting that the two principal cardinals which would decide on the future of Indo-US relationship are: "how much can India compromise and assist the US in keeping intact the international non-proliferation regimes and how far can the US go in accommodating Indian interests into its policy towards China and Pakistan?"

Other vital aspects that will come into focus are - will India sign the CTBT? what will be the Indian role in FMCT (fissile material control treaty) negoapproach towards Sino-Pakistan strategic cooperation and the level of US-China security cooperation? As of now, Mahapatra observes that "the Clinton admin-

istration is not yet clear about

the move it should take and

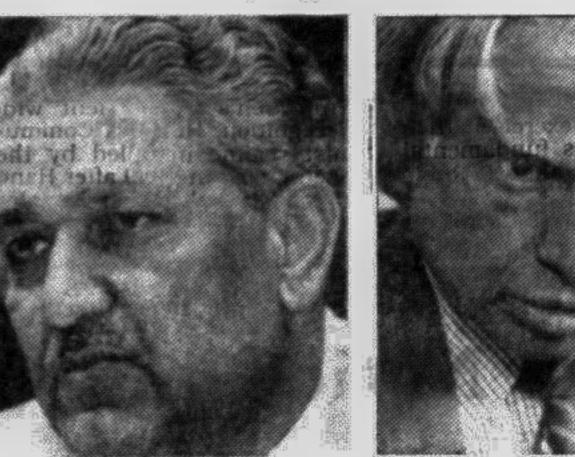
hence has been sending con-

tiations? What will be the US

flicting signals." Under the Clinton administration although a new south Asian bureau was created in the state department to pay better attention to the region, "the priorities set at that time did

couraging". Focusing on the background to Indo-US relations, the author holds that it was the 'intense

not, however, appear very en-



THE TWO ABDULS India's APJ Abdul Kalam right, and Pakistan's Abdul Qadeer Khan, left, are the two men who helped build the bombs that sparked worldwide reaction in May.

cold war" in which US had been involved. India's policy of nonalignment and the absence of any major convergence of economic interests which prevented the two countries from "enjoying any lasting political cooperation in international

Dr Mahapatra traces Washington's "hard" policy towards India from the days of president Eisenhower and Kennedy and notes that the selective use of food-aid programme to "armtwist" New Delhi was particularly noticeable during the tenure of Lyndon B Johnson.

He further holds that US poiicy towards Kashmir "has never been helpful towards the resolution of Kashmir issue."

According to him it has become 'fashionable' in the American academic as well as policy making circles to speak of a nuclear danger in the Indian subnew kind of political game, that links the Kashmir issue with the nuclear issue.

"American scholars as well as officials have been seeking to create an impression that one of the best ways to resolve the nuclear issue between India and Pakistan issue is through the resolution of the Kashmir prob-

"All kinds of worst case scenarios are being floated around suggesting that the next nuclear holocaust may occur in the Indian sub-continent where India and Pakistan may resort to a war over the Kashmir issue."

Force the Senators into passing Shariat bill, says Sharif

By Beena Sarwar

Since he was sworn in last Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's attempt to Islamise Pakyear. Sharif has taken momenistan has been checkmated by tous decisions without taking the imposition of Governor's his Cabinet into confidence, rule in the troubled Pakistani like the enforcement of the province of Sindh, reports IPS. Anti-Terrorist Act, the swear-The controversial 15th Coning in of right-wing Judge Rafiq Tarrar as Pakistan President, stitutional Amendment Bill. popularly called the Shariat conducting nuclear tests, im-Bill, has lost even the slimmest posing Emergency and most recently, Governor's rule in viochance of ratification in the lence-torn Sindh. Senate, but rights activists who

> tematically chiselled away the principles of provincial autonomy, say political activists, particularly those from the

All these moves have sys-

women and religious minorities are particularly threatened, as if cultural and artistic expression," comments Mehboob Khan, a lawyer.

Many people are trying to counter the atmosphere of repression and fear by clutching at the straw of cultural expression. The rock band Junoon has never been as popular as it is now, since it was banned by the government for allegedly making anti-Pakistan statements during a recent tour of India.

Classical Kathak dancer Naheed Siddiqui from Birm-



Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's attempt to Islamise Pakistan by introducing the Shariah Law has been checkmated by the imposition of Governor's rule in the

troubled Pakistani province of Sindh.

"smaller" provinces whose voices have been studiously ig-

Sinking political differences, opposition political parties have joined hands with non-governmental groups and individuals against the Shariat Bill. Last month in Lahore they flexed their muscle at a large political rally.

Recently, hundreds of prominent citizens from Pakistan's big cities of Islamabad. Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar and Quetta rejected the bill in an open letter to the Senators, that was reported in papers on November 4. Informal surveys, including one conducted by 'The News' daily on the Internet, indicate that over 75.5 per cent

are strongly against the bill. Many fear that its very inbers on important issues," says troduction has intensified the a bitter ruling Pakistan Muslim threat of "Talibanisation" of Pakistan. "In this situation,

ingham, England, who is currently in Lahore, is overwhelmed by the interest in dance now that it might again become taboo as during the martial law rule of Ziaul Haq. "By word of mouth alone, students are flocking to me, even though they say their parents will never let them perform in public," she says, bemused.

The privately organised annual Music Conference in Lahore at the end of October drew record crowds the last night leaving not even standing room in the 3000-seat open air theatre and ending well past three in the morning. "Culture is the anti-thesis of

anarchy," observes I A Rehman, director of the independent **Human Rights Commission of** Pakistan. "It has little chance to flourish in a society that has chosen the path of chaos and fratricide.

Nepali minister faces flak for small schemes

By Suman Pradhan

KATHMANDU: Every government in Nepal has touted the development of the country's hydroelectric resources as its answer to chronic problems of poverty

While her predecessors pushed for big power projects on Himalayan rivers, Shiela Acharya, who took over as energy resources Minister this April, has put her faith in the "small is beautiful" philosophy. reports IPS.

In her first month in office, Acharya who is also Nepal's first woman deputy prime minister, cleared small power projects and simplified loan procedures for rural communities to build and operate micro-hydel plants.

She also ordered officials to plug the massive power leakages, which today stands at 25 per cent, and force defaulters to pay up outstanding electricity bills, all to the delight of her supporters; among them independent experts who have been lobbying for a change in government policy.

But seven months later support for Acharya's reforms has waned. Even her supporters are saying that she promised too much and hasn't delivered. Moreover she has refrained

from taking hard decisions on issues and projects that matter, dragging her foot that is likely to cost the nation dearly in the future, they add. "Despite her initial

promises, it now appears that the deputy prime minister is unwilling to take the decisions that are really needed to reform the power and irrigation sectors," says Dipak Gyawali, a leading water resources expert.

"She is not taking steps to make structural changes in the system. Just a little tinkering here and a little there. What Nepal's power and irrigation sectors need is massive structural changes in the system and she is just not doing it," adds Gyawali. Criticism from experts like

Gyawali have delighted legions of other critics of Acharya who dislike her for entirely different reasons. In her early days as water resources minister. Acharya

raised a firestorm of a contro-

versy here by thwarting the USbased energy transitional Enron Corp which is angling to develop a huge power project in western Nepal

The 6-8 billion dollars Enron has said it would spend on developing the 10,800 MW Karnali-Chisapani hydroelectric project had government ministers salivating. Under pressure from members of her own Nepali Congress

party and Prime Minister Gir-

ija Prasad Koirala, Acharya was forced to backtrack and issue an invitation to Enron to return to Kathmandu for negotiations. "You don't send away a company like Enron," former prime minister and a powerful mem-

ber of Acharya's party Sher Bahadur Deuba observes. "Enron's interest in Nepal could invite other foreign investors to follow suit. What we need is massive investment to build our infrastructure.

With precarious support for her policies inside her own party and government, the energy minister has been finding the going very rough, say some

Even Gyawali believes "she (Acharya) is a prisoner of her party's past (on big water projects). She does not have any support in the party so it is difficult for her to take revolutionary steps. Besides, the commission agents (Lobbyists for Enron) are a tough lot to deal with.'

On the defensive, Acharya, who has refused press interviews, issued a press statement last Friday, explaining her side of the story. She said that under her

command the Water Resources Ministry has "saved" nearly one billion rupees (15 million dollar) in project costs, and blamed a "water Mafia" for obstructing her worked. But Rajendra Dahal, a re-

spected journalist with wide experience on water issues, says that Acharya's claimed savings are misplaced. "In a sense, she is right because she has not taken any meaningful decisions in her seven months in office. When you don't take decisions. you don't spend money." he counters.

New Delhi's goodbye to old cars NEW DELHI: For a change,

Delhi's air was breathable one day in early October. That was when a bewildering congeries of dilapidated taxis, trucks, buses, autorickshaws, vans and other commercial transport vehicles defying description were finally off the roads, reports IPS. But the Supreme Court order

banning all commercial vehicles, older than 15 years could mean starvation for the 20,000odd drivers whose livelihoods depended on coaxing the smoke-spewing old contraptions along Delhi's congested

A couple of thousand of the drivers brought their ancient vehicles and families out for a demonstration on Parliament street at noon on October 2 and phased-out vehicles as part of a package which also includes a four percent loan rebate. "Owners who furnish proof

of having sold their vehicles outside Delhi or have surrendered their vehicles to the Transport Department will be eligible for a four percent cut on bank loans for a new vehicle," said Delhi Chief Secretary Omesh Saigal

But Arora said bank loans are not easy to get and, even if they were, interest rates were too high for most taxi drivers. Each new vehicle costs at least \$5,000. Says Gurpeet Sandhu, a taxi driver: "I will either have to go back to my farm in Punjab or turn into a hired driver for someone who has the money to buy a new vehicle."

It's the end of the road for old, rickety commercial vehicles in the congested Indian capital of New Delhi. And as Dev Raj of Inter Press Service reports, it looks like the government means business this time.

even sent up a Mercy Appeal to President K R Narayanan as a last resort. "The President is sure to in-

tervene — he comes from humble origins like us," said Jaswant Singh Arora, President of the Federation of Transport Unions Congress (FTUC) which is leading the drivers' agitation. The court ordered a com-

plete phasing out of an esti-

mated 18,000 vehicles by December after successive state governments failed to act for fear of the powerful drivers unions and possible shortages of public transport. Transport Department offi-

cials warned that any commercial vehicles that do not meet the Supreme Court specifications from will be impounded on sight. "We already have a list of 10,000 vehicles (considered illegal)," an official said, adding that nearly 5,000 of these are taxis and autorickshaws while the others were buses and

Arora blamed the government for not acting sooner but allowing transporters to go on using old vehicles and then sitting by as the Supreme Court sprung the surprise ban in September. However, the government has promised to help out by waiving sales tax on all new commercial vehicles bought as replacement for

Autorickshaw drivers are not so badly off because, after the government stopped issuing new permits for the highlypolluting, two-stroke engined three-wheelers in September. there has been a demand for ex-

isting permits. "I can sell my permit for \$500 which is much more than what my vehicle is worth." said Suresh, a driver saddled with a 25-year-old, smoke-belching, autorickshaw. But Suresh will still have to find another \$ 12,000 if he is to buy a new autorickshaw and continue with the only skill he knows.

According to Arora, with thousands of able-bodied men rendered unemployed by the court order and with families to provide for, the crime rate in Delhi is bound to go up in the coming days. The worst-hit are drivers who ply three-wheeler. Harley Davidsons, originally brought to Delhi by the US army during the second world war and then abandoned as war surplus.

Enterprising drivers bought up the throbbingly powerful contraption, jazzed them up with colourful canopies and turned them into commercial vehicles capable of lugging eight passengers at a time. Because they were allowed to ply on the historic route alongside the Yamuna River taking in seven-

teenth century monuments such as Red Fort, Jama Masjid and Humayaun's tomb, they

were a favourite with tourists. But after being kept in repair for half a century, the phutphutis - their echoic local description — have finally reached the end of the road." don't know what I am going to do said Salim Ahmed," who has been plying a phutphuti for nearly 30 years.

Yet another banned pre-war curiosity, said to be of German origin, is a three wheeler van whose engine drives the front wheel with a chain. From the front it looks remarkably like Darth Vader's helmet on three wheels. Apart from being an eyesore and a serious impediment to the smooth flow of traffic, these ancient vehicles contributed to Delhi's status as one the world's four most-polluted cities.

According to the Delhi Environmental Status report brought out a couple of years ago, the incidence of respiratory diseases in the capital is 12 times the national average and nearly 30 per cent of the capital's 11 million people suffered from some breathing disorder.

Since then, the situation has only worsened with the government hesitating to order the aging fleet off the streets fearing that it would aggravate commuter problems. Delhi is yet to have a mass rapid transit sys-

But the government now means business. In September, it banned the sale of leaded petrol in Delhi despite protests from vehicles owners that unleaded petrol would damage their vehicles through knock-

"Our next step will be to introduce catalytic converters to check benzene levels in Delhi", said state transport minister Rajinder Gupta.

A study conducted on benzene concentrations in Delhi carried out by the Netherlands Institute for Applied Research showed that air concentrations on an open road in Delhi was six times higher than that in a traffic tunnel in Rotterdam.

Even comparisons with a similar megacity such as Cairo was shocking. The air in Delhi has about three times more benzene concentrations than that in Cairo, the study found.