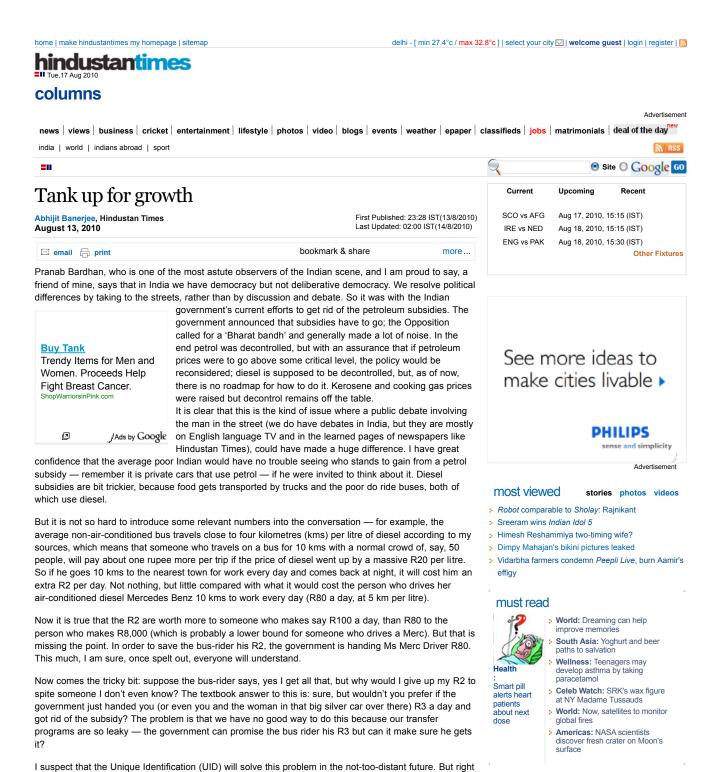
hurts him.

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air. Subsidising driving is not in his interest.

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now this is the real constraint. However, I am still optimistic about the average Indian. I think he will have no trouble understanding the fact that our government is living beyond its means, partly because of the at least R60,000 crore it spends in the average year on petroleum subsidies (that is almost R600 per Indian!), and this is a significant part of the reason why prices keep going up so much, which ultimately

Moreover I believe that in his guts he understands that all these private cars in the street are not exactly helping life for him: he is late coming home because of the traffic; he can smell the carbon fumes in the

Still the government may need to sweeten the deal a bit more. Perhaps there is a way to subsidise bus fares and reduce tolls and taxes on trucks and buses. It will need some figuring out but it can be done. If

fledgling democracy in 2005 without political upheaval, we can surely do it. The leaders of the UPA just have to be willing to take the debate to the streets, explain why we need to go there, fight the misinformation with words and reason.

And this is the time to do it. Not to leave it half done: decontrolling while keeping the option to re-impose controls is in some ways worse than just keeping the controls, because it creates huge incentives to continuously lobby for controls — who is to say whether they are needed — with the obvious implied temptations for those running the petroleum ministry. It also creates huge pressures on the government — it will take a brave finance minister to resist subsidies if petroleum prices were to go up before a key election. Let us get rid of the whole problem once and for all

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