

Voice of Shakthi Thursday 31 May 2001

Sadly, the months of June and July in Sri Lanka gives every indication of unsettled conditions yet again. Even in folklore, July Hathai is an expression associated with bad [news](#). The July 80 workers strike, the July 1983 communal riots are some of the major upheavals Sri Lankans have had to face in years past. Current political developments in Sri Lanka gives us no hope that this year too July will bring any joy to the people.

Faced with a huge defence bill which prevents Sri Lanka from making any progress in the economic front, the Government has been forced to seek some [accomodation](#) with the LTTE.

The UNP meanwhile is busy trying to topple the Government through a motion of no-confidence on the Government. They are busy trawling through the ranks of the Government itself, the JVP, TULF and the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress to gather support for this move.

This has forced the Government to pacify its Coalition partners, the TULF by prematurely announcing news of an agreement with the LTTE and promptly acceding to the demand by the SLMC for a separate Muslim Provincial Council.

But however much the President may want a negotiated settlement, there is deep division within the Government itself as exemplified by the hardline stance of Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickremanayake.

Then there is the pressure exerted from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank with their demands on further restructuring of the country's economy. The privatisation of banks and [insurance companies](#) is already underway with the profit-making National Insurance Corporation already sold off to the private sector.

Under tremendous pressure from many fronts, it seems the Government's current strategy is to stifle any signs of popular unrest against these measures. The summary dismissal of 183 Railway employees at Maligawatte who demanded a salary advance before the Wesak [holidays](#), the police assault on student protests over privatisation of education and attempts to link the JVP with the LTTE are all indications of a desperate Government's attempts to cling to power at any cost.

And the ultimate victims will be, yet again, the ordinary people of the country.