



Unions caught unawares by new utility tariffs

Tariffs published on Friday when unions were still meeting KPMG auditors

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THE government has published the new electricity and water tariffs, much to the surprise of some of the unions which are still seeking further clarifications to the eco-reductions for low consumers of energy.

The two legal notices were published on Friday, when unions were meeting with KPMG auditors after protesting that not everyone would benefit from

government's eco-reduction.

The new tariffs, retroactively dated to 1 October 2008, went unnoticed by the General Workers Union and the Malta Union of Teachers who expressed surprise at their publication.

On the other hand, Union Had-diema Maqghudin secretary-general Gejtu Vella said he was aware that the new tariffs had been published.

GWU deputy secretary-general Gejtu Mercieca yesterday described the legal notice as a surprise.

"This is definitely unacceptable, as to date the absolute majority of the Maltese unions and representatives of the business community have not reached an agreement with the government on the tariffs," Mercieca said.

"It's a surprise for us as until last weekend the majority of the unions were still in discussion with the government on clear important questions regarding sensitive issues such as the 73% and the eco-reduction rates."

The unions, except the UHM and the CMTU, in fact met KP-

MG at the behest of government after declaring that government had misled them when it claimed that 73% of Maltese families would be benefiting from the eco-reductions on tariffs.

In fact, the government was also including properties that are either vacated or used as secondary residences.

MUT president John Bencini also expressed dismay, saying his union was never informed about the publication of the tariffs.

"If the government will roll on with these tariffs then there will

be huge consequences for our families. The legal notice was an irresponsible act as the government knew that the absolute majority of unions was not fully in agreement with the new tariffs.

"On Friday, KPMG's auditors confirmed our doubts. The meetings confirmed that we were right about doubting the government's claims. We will still send our letter to the government and we will wait for its answers," the MUT president said.

pg 5 ▶

NAXXAR FIREWORKS TRAGEDY



FOUR Naxxar families yesterday received €284,700 from the Housing Authority to be able to rebuild their houses that were destroyed by a fireworks explosion in a garage last March - see story page 3

MINISTRY CAUGHT LYING OVER MCAST INVESTIGATION

Indicted bidders are government-appointed directors

THE Ministry of Education misled MaltaToday in a bid not to reveal the two companies now facing criminal charges over allegedly false declarations in their tender for an MCAST tuition contract.

The spokesperson for Dolores Cristina, Mario Schiavone, claimed that the ministry was not informed by the police which two companies bidding for the Malta College of Arts, Sciences and Technology contract, had been accused of making false declarations in their tender.

MaltaToday can confirm the police informed the ministry's permanent secretary of the companies in a letter dated 20 November. Five days later, MaltaToday

queried with the ministry over its press statement which also did not disclose the companies' names.

Both the companies' directors are government-appointed directors in the Occupational Health and Safety Authority and the Malta Communications Authority.

In another twist to the MCAST saga concerning the contract for tuition centres for 600 MCAST students, both Key Services and Future Focus were allowed to retain their part of the contract upon submitting their declaration to the Contracts Department claiming they did not make any false declaration in their bids.

pg 4 ▶

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