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## Proposed energy tariffs

# Social partners warn of economic shocks

Industry is reeling from the government's proposed energy tariffs and social partners have warned that hotels and businesses will be crushed, leading to significant job losses and a shock to the economy.

After a day of silence following the government's announcement, the reactions from the social partners poured in yesterday all accusing the government of its failure to discuss the proposals.

The Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association (MHRA) warned that a number of hotels will have to shut down leading to significant job losses. It is convinced the proposed measures will increase operational costs threefold.

Its council will be calling an extraordinary general meeting on Tuesday to discuss the stand it will be taking. The MHRA felt the upward pressure on costs, at a time when the industry was bracing itself for a potential drop in demand due to the

international economic crises, was going to lead to "very serious problems".

It said it was very disappointed by the government's lack of consultation and was surprised by its declared stance on the matter.

"MHRA cannot understand the government's admission that no social and economic impact assessment was necessary in the light of the proposed tariffs," it said.

The Federation of Industry's warnings were just as dire and it predicted "a sudden economic shock", which will directly affect investment expansion decisions and business confidence levels in the economy.

"The proposed tariffs will threaten thousands of jobs; there will be an increase in inflation rates and a slowdown in the economy's growth," FOI deputy president Helga Ellul warned.

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## Moving house



A caravan in Bahar lċ-Ċaġhaq being removed during a combined operation involving the police, the Public Works, the Malta Environment and Planning Authority, the Land Department and Enemalta, yesterday. Photo: Matthew Mirabelli » Story on page 16

## Nadur rape case

# Court speaks of attempt to buy girl's silence

Mark Micallef

The Criminal Court yesterday acknowledged that there appears to have been an attempt, also by lawyers, to bribe the family of a 14-year-old girl at the centre of sexual assault allegations into not pressing

charges. In a judgment which imposed stricter bail conditions on four men from Nadur facing the charges, Chief Justice Vincent De Gaetano said that "in this case it seems that there have been manoeuvres by people who had an interest to see that the case does not reach the courts.

It seems that, before the accused were charged in court, money changed hands in order for there to be a forfeiture of the prosecution (in respect of the accused bearing the Said surname)".

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