

## News in Brief

## Flood disaster Holiday-makers tell of Madeira horror

A group of **Canarian holidaymakers** who were caught up in the horrific floods and mudslides in Madeira are back home after a delayed return.

Around 50 people from here were on the island when the freak weather destroyed parts of the capital Funchal and surrounding areas, killing 43 people, although the figure may rise further given the number of persons still unaccounted for. Two Tenerife friends described the chaos in Funchal as "Dantesque".

The Canarian passengers said airline Binter could have flown them back earlier from the disaster and complained that they had to cover their own costs after their flight on Thursday was cancelled. The Canarian government has offered to help with the clean-up operation in Madeira.

## Power blackouts

# Electric commitment

The Canarian President, Paulino Rivero, continues to claim that the electricity company, Endesa and managers Red Eléctrica, have a commitment to the Canaries, "which they are going to fulfil".

During a business breakfast organised by the association of management progress, Rivero insisted that his government would be, "inflexible" and look for alternatives from other electricity suppliers. A meeting has already been scheduled for the beginning of March with the top man at Endesa and the President of Red Eléctrica España in the Canaries.

"There has to be a series of commitments, including an audit of the existing systems, to be presented within the next six months," he added.

He indicated that the audit should be carried out by a totally independent operator, so that the real situation of the electric system in the archipelago can be assessed to



Photo credit Gálmaz Press Office

Ecologists claim that what is needed is better maintenance

see if it is adequate for existing and future needs. "In the first place we want to find out the condition of the electric system and secondly, we want an improvement plan for the electricity power stations within the next two months, especially at Jinámar (Gran Canaria) and Las Caletillas (Tenerife). In

third place, within a month, REE should also present an improvement plan for the Canarian substations and fulfil those plans," Rivero emphasised.

He went on to call for action from the Regional Government to use the exceptional provisions allowed by law for actions to force

investment in and updating of the system. He claimed that so far the suppliers have used excuses to prevent this investment, excuses which they intend to remove.

Many claim that it is so much hot air, that Rivero will have a hard job getting the REE out of the islands and that the share of the cake

is not enticing enough to bring in alternative operators. Increased charges without increased services and a continuous series of blackouts whenever there are storms or high winds are infuriating customers and little appears to have been done since tropical storm Delta in 2005, apart from the Calvary nicknamed pylon eyesores from the airport to the south and the capital.

Ecologists are worried that the Regional Government will try and use these latest breakdowns in the system as an excuse to force through the building of another power station rather than improving maintenance of the existing services and promoting less reliance on external energy sources. The Si Se Puede party warns that the government might use public anger at the recent incidents to do the opposite and open talks for a new station to increase capacity instead of continuing the drive for a more sustainable approach to energy.

# fly to the uk

from **€46**  
one way inc. tax

gatwick  
luton  
manchester  
birmingham

flights

holidays

hotels

+ more

monarch.co.uk