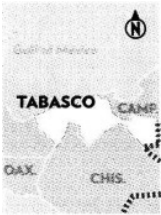


TABASCO

Gov. pleas for aid as downpours subside



TABASCO - Two municipalities in Tabasco were declared a natural disaster zone on Tuesday following torrential downpours for nearly two weeks.

Local authorities will now have access to funding from the Natural Disaster Fund (Fonden) and must assess the degrees of damage to Huimanguillo and Cárdenas in western Tabasco.

Priority measures included reestablishing communications, providing basic services, cleaning flooded homes and returning the area back to normal. Packages of food, water, blankets, mattresses, cleaning kits and steel sheets were being distributed, and porta poties and moving trucks were respectively installed and dispatched.

Rain began tapering off on Monday morning, after the homes of more than 200,000 people were affected by inundations.

The National Water Commission

(Conagua) registered between 0.1 mm and 74 mm between Sunday morning and Monday, and nearly all of the state's rivers receded between 26 cm and 80 cm below flood stage. However, Conagua said an approaching cold front late last night was set to provoke moderate to strong precipitation today and tomorrow and winds reaching 60 km per hour.

The Contalpa zone in western Tabasco was the hardest hit. Of the 200,000 people affected, some 33,000 were staying in shelters. Floodwaters were receding in some areas, but the area needs to be disinfected before residents can return home, Conagua said.

Governor Andrés Granier Melo toured the Huimanguillo and Cárdenas municipalities to assess the damage.

On Sunday, Granier gave his third "Informe," a state of the state address. The Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI, governor, indicated he is satisfied with the state's progress since he took office in 2006, but said he was worried about repeated flooding.

"I want to call on all of Tabasco and everyone in Mexico," he said from Villahermosa, "our brothers and sisters need help, they need food and we need you to help us right now."

The first priorities, he said, were providing food to residents of Cárdenas and Huimanguillo. "They have to eat, they're workers and nothing is being produced in the fields, they're totally devastated."

With the Tonalá and Blasillo rivers overflowing, access to border states were cut off, he said, delaying some people's commutes to or from Tabasco by as much as five or six hours.

This is the third consecutive year that Tabasco has been hit by severe flooding. From Oct. 2007 to Oct. 2008, inundations caused more than 37 billion pesos in damage, according to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL). Granier said the damages have devastated "practically 100 percent of Tabasco's territory."

-THE NEWS



A woman wades through floodwaters in Huimanguillo, which, along with Cárdenas, were declared federal disaster areas yesterday.

