

Grid stabilization havana

The National Electric Union (UNE) said it was producing 533 megawatts of electricity by evening, still just a fraction of typical dinnertime demand of between 3,000 and 3,200 megawatts, leaving most Cubans in the dark as night fell across the Caribbean island.

Earlier, the communist-run government said it would prioritize returning power to hospitals and water pumping facilities. Schools and non-essential government services were closed until further notice.

It was the latest in a string of countrywide blackouts of Cuba's antiquated and increasingly frail power generation system. This year, Cuba's grid fell into near-total disarray, stressed by fuel shortages, natural disaster and economic crisis.

Hours-long rolling blackouts and severe shortages of food, medicine and water have made life increasingly hard for many Cubans, who in recent years have fled the island in record-breaking numbers.

Several other major power plants were undergoing maintenance and were offline when the Matanzas plant failed, starving the grid of electricity and leading to the countrywide collapse, the energy minister said.

"I didn't know it was a total blackout again," Mora said. "Where I am living ... there is no gas either, if there is no electricity there is no way to make food, it has to be with firewood or charcoal."

Cuba's decrepit and long obsolete grid collapsed multiple times in October as fuel supplies dwindled and Hurricane Oscar struck the far eastern end of the island, then again in November with the passage of Hurricane Rafael.

The National Electric Union (UNE) said it was producing 533 MW of electricity by evening, still just a fraction of typical dinnertime demand of between 3,000 and 3,200 megawatts, leaving a majority of Cubans in the dark as night fell across the Caribbean island.

It was the latest in a string of nationwide blackouts of Cuba's antiquated and increasingly frail power generation system. This year, Cuba's grid fell into near-total disarray, stressed by fuel shortages, natural disaster and economic crisis.

Hours-long rolling blackouts and severe shortages of food, medicine and water have made life increasingly unbearable for many Cubans, who in recent years have fled the island in record-breaking numbers.

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Web: <https://www.sumthingtasty.co.za/contact-us/>

Email: energystorage2000@gmail.com

WhatsApp: 8613816583346

