

Peru plans counter effort to upset Alan Garcia's asylum request



Lima, November 21 (RHC)-- Peru plans to send a letter to Uruguay to counter former President Alan Garcia's efforts to gain asylum and avoid a court-ordered, 18-month travel ban amid corruption allegations, according to President Martin Vizcarra.

"I contacted the Uruguayan president by phone, we had a conversation of between 7 and 8 minutes where we raised the importance of this issue so that, while respecting Uruguay's decision, Peru's position will be taken under consideration," Vizcarra said.

Garcia who applied for asylum Sunday night is staying in the Uruguayan foreign embassy to await the nation's decision. Foreign Affairs Minister Hugo de Zela said that per the bilateral 1954 Convention on Diplomatic Asylum, Uruguay can only approve the former president's application if evidence shows he is a victim of political persecution.

Vizcarra has denied all allegations of political persecution. Garcia, who lives mainly in Spain, arrived in Lima last week to testify before prosecutor Perez for an investigation into alleged irregularities in the construction of an electric train in Lima by Odebrecht, but the hearing was postponed by the magistrate.

Peruvian Prosecutor Jose Domingo Perez said in a hearing that Odebrecht paid Garcia \$100,000 for a conference and that the money came from a company fund, the same used to pay bribes in several Latin

American countries. Judge Juan Carlos Sanchez Balbuena, of the Second Anti-Corruption Preparatory Investigation Court, said "there are sufficient elements of conviction" to declare the measure founded.

Garcia has confirmed that he held several conferences all over the world as former president, but has rejected the accusations that a presentation he gave in Brazil for a group of businessmen, was paid by Odebrecht.

The bribe cases related to Odebrecht has sullied the last four presidents of Peru. Former Presidents Ollanta Humala and Pedro Pablo Kuczynski are facing investigations in the country, while Alejandro Toledo weighs an extradition request from the United States.

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