

Venezuela says gold kept at Bank of England needed to fight COVID



Caracas, May 29 (RHC)-- Venezuela's Central Bank (BCV) and United Nations Development Program (UNDP) have agreed to use part of the gold deposited in the Bank of England to acquire food and medicine to face the COVID-19 pandemic, BCV President Calixto Ortega declared on Wednesday.

On Thursday, Venezuelan authorities appeared in a London court to defend the mechanism established with the UNDP in March. As Ortega said, they claimed that the Bank of England refuses to follow the instructions to sell part of the gold held by the BCV in that institution.

"The Bank of England is not complying with the contract signed with the Central Bank and is risking its prestige," he denounced. The British entity's only task is the custody of the gold.

Earlier, the president of the Banco Central de Venezuela said: "We agreed with the UNDP that they would receive the funds directly. It's not my word; it's not that I'm saying I'm going to buy food, medicine, and medical equipment. It is the United Nations that is saying it, and they are not going to lend themselves to anything shady, anything that is not neutral, independent."

According to a complaint made by Executive Vice President Delcy Rodriguez, since March the Bank of England has frozen 31 tons of gold belonging to Venezuela, due to the British government's position of not recognizing President Nicolas Maduro's administration. She added that opposition lawmaker Juan Guaido is behind this maneuver to strip Venezuela of its assets and thus try to oust Maduro from the presidency.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Venezuela will also file a complaint with the International Criminal Court, for extermination and crimes against humanity. The gold retained by the British bank would be used to fight the disease, at a time when the blockade imposed by the US on the South American nation is increasing in strength.

At the end of Thursday's court session, it was announced that a hearing will be held to decide the legal outcome on June 22nd.

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