

Brazil's National Museum begs for financial donations



Rio de Janeiro, May 9 (RHC)-- Brazil's devastated National Museum is broke and cannot afford storage for artifacts rescued from the ashes of the gutted building, its director said. In a desperate plea for more funding, Alexander Kellner warned "there will be no more National Museum" in Rio de Janeiro unless the education ministry coughs up some cash.

"We urgently need one million reais (\$250,000 USD) to be able to breathe," Kellner told reporters as the museum presented pieces from its Egyptian collection that survived the fire that took place on September 2nd last year.

"We are having difficulties in the daily running of our institution -- professors don't have places to work, we don't have space to store pieces that we rescued. We can't just leave them on the ground. Without the education ministry, there will be no more National Museum."

A faulty air conditioning system sparked a fire that gutted Latin America's main natural history museum, destroying most of its collection. After the blaze, the education ministry released the equivalent of \$2.5 million for emergency works to preserve the building's facade. But other public funds have not yet been disbursed.

Kellner told AFP last month that the museum had received the equivalent of \$280,000 in donations -- a tiny fraction of the more than \$950,000 donated for the reconstruction of Notre-Dame cathedral in Paris.

The total cost of restoring the National Museum will reportedly be around 100 million reais. The blaze wiped out much of the museum's collection, dealing a hard blow to the main showcase of Brazil's anthropological

heritage and history.

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