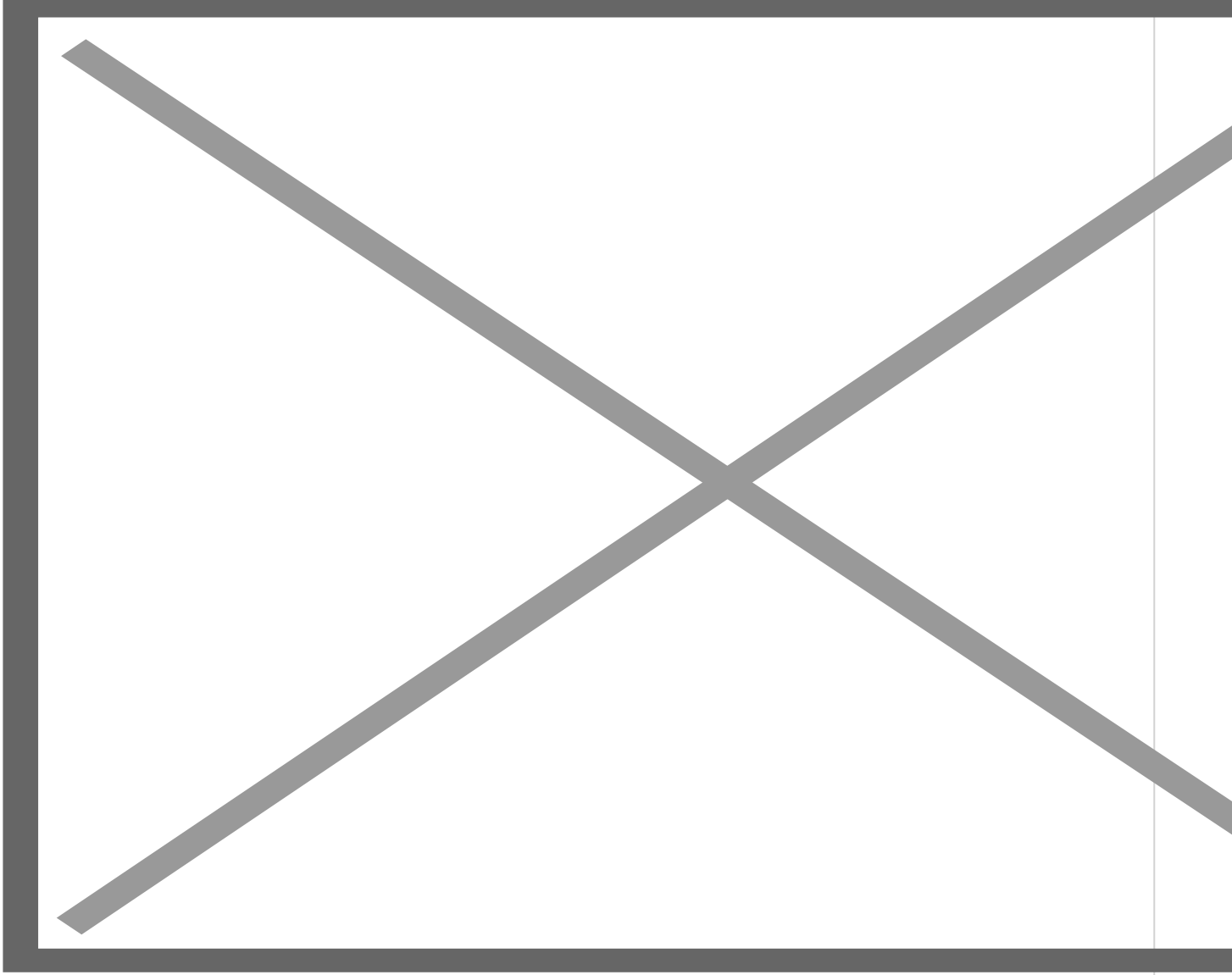


Peru's President Pedro Castillo announces resignation of prime minister

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In August, Bellido delivered a speech to Congress in the Indigenous Quechua language for the first time in Peru's history [File: Angela Ponce/Reuters]

Lima, October 5 (RHC)-- Peru's Prime Minister Guido Bellido has resigned two months into his tenure, the country's President Pedro Castillo announced on Wednesday, citing "instability" in the country.

Castillo had appointed Bellido after his presidential victory in July, and Congress approved the new administration in August. "Today I inform the country that we have accepted the resignation of Prime Minister Guido Bellido Ugarte, whom we thank for his services rendered," said Castillo in a surprise message carried on state television on Wednesday.

Under Peruvian law, the prime minister's resignation automatically triggers that of the entire cabinet. Castillo gave no reasons for the move but said a new prime minister and cabinet – which could be the same as the old one – would be announced later.

After his resignation was announced, Bellido posted a photo from the movie *Gladiator* on Twitter with the caption: "We return to the arena where we belong." Both Castillo and Bellido are from the socialist Free Peru Party, but Bellido had adopted more hard-left stances and had faced opposition for suggesting Peru's natural gas sector should be nationalised.

Last month, his cabinet delivered a letter to Argentina's Pluspetrol, the most significant natural gas player in Peru, asking to renegotiate the firm's contract with the state to pay higher taxes.

In an interview with the Reuters news agency after taking office, Bellido called for direct state involvement in key economic areas. "Our feeling is that strategic sectors need to be in the hands of the government," he said.

"In my opinion, natural gas is a strategic resource and needs to have government participation [as well] as new hydroelectric projects of large size." In August, Bellido also delivered a speech to Congress in the Indigenous Quechua language for the first time in the country's history.

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