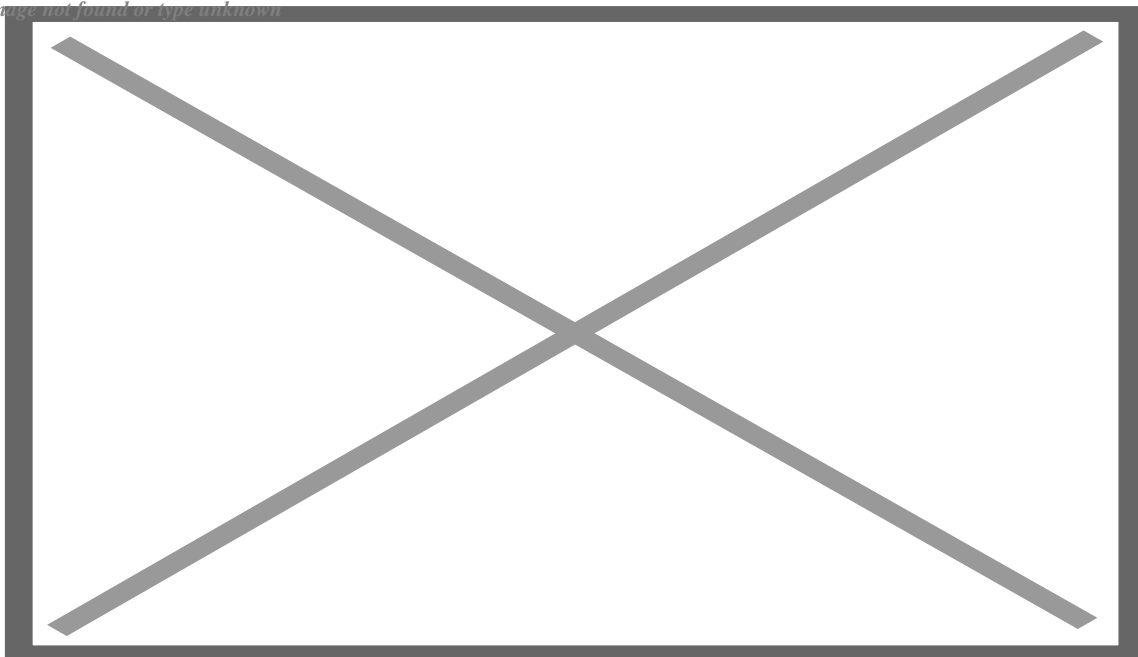


President Petro calls for discussion of social reforms in Colombia

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Petro defended the need for a broad agrarian reform to solve one of the country's major problems, which is land tenure. | Photo: EFE

Bogota, July 21 (RHC)-- The president of Colombia, Gustavo Petro, installed this Thursday a new session of Congress with a call to legislators to contribute to move forward his environmental and social justice programs.

According to local analysts, the second legislative period that began on Thursday will test President Petro's ability to push forward the social reforms he proposed to Colombians during his election campaign.

Petro defended the need for a broad agrarian reform to solve one of the country's major problems, which is land tenure.

"The agrarian reform has shown that Colombia's problem is land," Petro said in the speech at the installation of the new session of the National Congress. The president pointed out that an agrarian reform "expands the internal market, frees the labor force from the land and therefore would set the fundamental conditions for industrialization."

The Minister of the Interior, Luis Fernando Velasco, announced that the Government will insist on processing a health reform which will give access to basic services to millions of Colombians in the geographic periphery. The opposition and employers' unions argued that the initiative was intended to return to the State a leading role in the health system, opening the floodgates of corruption.

The Colombian president added on Thursday that "the war between the insurgency and the Colombian state has come to an end", although he warned that the violence is moving towards a new phase that has to do with "territorial and wealth control, not the seizure of power".

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