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Ecuador declares oil industry force majeure after bridge collapse

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Written by Alexandra Valencia for Reuters →

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QUITO, Feb 23 (Reuters) - Ecuador's energy ministry issued a decree on Thursday declaring force majeure for its oil industry, a day after a bridge collapse forced the closure of crude and gas pipelines.

State oil company Petroecuador and private pipeline operator OCP Ecuador suspended operations on their respective pipelines on Wednesday as a preventative measure after a nearby bridge in Napo province collapsed.

Petroecuador said in a statement late on Thursday that it would gradually shut oil wells, estimating pur

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during the next seven days.

"By virtue of the force majeure, occasioned by the collapse of a bridge on the Marker River due to heavy seasonal rains, force majeure is declared for operators of exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbons which have been affected by hydrocarbon transport through the SOTE, OCP and Shushufindi Quito polyduct systems and the impossibility they have of receiving and transporting crude oil," the decree from the ministry said.



Petroecuador and private operators should report to the ministry what activities they are able to carry out while the pipelines are halted and what maintenance can be done at oil fields to guarantee operations, the decree added.

Petroecuador said in a statement it would implement a plan to gradually shut oil wells in fields located in the Amazon and contact clients.

"In the case of crude exports to the international market, the state oil company will notify the companies with which it currently has contractual obligations for the handover of planned shipments," Petroecuador said.

The SOTE and OCP pipelines are regularly halted because of tubing damage from rocks and landslides, but the incident this week occurred at a different location than ones that took place in 2020 and 2021.

Petroecuador attributed the bridge collapse to regressive erosion, a phenomena which has repeatedly damaged oil infrastructure in the Ecuadorean Amazon.

(Reporting by Alexandra Valencia; Writing by Julia Symmes Cobb; Editing by Sandra Maler and Himani Sarkar)

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