

## Protest causes drop in Ecuador oil output

Ecuador's national oil company Petroecuador has said that it incurred the loss of some 5,000 barrels of oil output because of a weekend protest that disrupted operations at a key production facility, Spanish news agency EFE reported Tuesday.

The state-owned oil major said that the shortfall would mount unless the facility returned to normal and may have unpredictable impact on price.

The protest began Sunday in Dayuma, a town in the Amazon province of Orellana.

Petroecuador said that around midday, one group of protesters blocked a bridge while others forced their way into the Auca Sur station and electric plant, 'demanding that operators shut down the entire power oil system, provoking disorder and acts of vandalism.'

By the early hours of Monday, another group of protesters reached the Auca 61D well and used dynamite to disable a hydraulic pump, effectively shutting down the installation, Petroecuador said.

Describing the vandalism as a 'terrorist' action, Petroecuador said it had already met the demands of Dayuma residents to improve public infrastructure in the district.

'Production losses will go on increasing every hour' as the complex remains shut down, Petroecuador said.

In March this year, a blockade by protesters in the Amazon region forced the company to cut oil exports by 36,000 barrels per day for about a week.

Between Petroecuador and private energy companies, Ecuador produces close to 600,000 barrels per day of crude oil, and revenues from petroleum exports finance about 35 percent of government spending.

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