

Cambodia Eyes Iranian Oil Imports

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Deputy Prime Minister Sok An has told Iran's ambassador to Cambodia that once an oil refinery in the country is operational, Cambodia would be able to import crude oil from Iran and export refined oil products to China, the Council of Ministers said on its website last week.

The announcement comes as both the US and the European Union have placed new sanctions on Iran in an attempt to get the country to abandon its alleged nuclear weapons program.

Mr. Sok An made the suggestion during a trade meeting Thursday with Iranian Ambassador Seyed Javad Ghavam Shahidi, when the two men discussed sending Cambodians to Tehran for training in the oil and gas sectors.

"Sok An told Iran that the joint venture with a Cambodian local partner can import crude oil from Iran and process it at the refinery, [and] export to China," said Ek Tha, spokesman for the Press and Quick Reaction Unit at the Council of Ministers.

He said he did not have any details on the investors behind the proposed refinery, but said that Chinese firms had shown an interest.

"It's too early to say how big an amount of crude oil would be imported from Iran, but we want to see both countries mutually benefit in terms of trade and investment."

In June, Mr. Sok An said a feasibility study would be carried out by the China Automation Control System Corporation and the Cambodian Petrochemical Company on constructing the refinery on 80 hectares in Preah Sihanouk province.

Diep Sareviseth, spokesman for the Cambodian National Petroleum Authority, the government body that would be tasked with regulating the refinery, said yesterday that a feasibility study was now under way.

"At this point in time, the feasibility is an ongoing process, nothing has been approved just yet," Mr. Sareviseth said, adding that the refinery could produce 5 million tons of petroleum products per year.

"If everything goes well, crude oil could be imported from Iran to process in Cambodia and re-export to China," he added.