

Belarus in Talks With Latvian Ports for Venezuelan Supplies

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Belarus' oil company said Friday that it was negotiating Venezuela crude imports via Latvia's ports of Ventspils and Riga.

Belarus plans to import up to 10 million metric tons of Venezuela crude via Ukrainian and Baltic ports next year, cutting imports of Russian oil, officials said.

Two test loadings of crude have been delivered to Belarus via Estonian and Lithuanian ports, and Belarus wants a deal with Latvian ports.

"I hope those negotiations [on crude imports] we have with Latvia will conclude positively as well. We are negotiating with Ventspils and Riga [ports]," Alexander Demidov, deputy director-general of Belarus Oil Company, told a Baltic economic forum.

Belarussian Transportation Minister Ivan Shcherbo said Minsk may import crude via Latvian

ports if it gets good transportation rates. "It's all up to transportation tariffs," he said, adding that no long-term contracts on crude transit have been signed yet, and crude import distribution via Baltic and Ukrainian ports has not been decided yet.

He also said Belarus would prefer to import crude via the Ventspils-Polotsk pipeline, which has not been used for crude since 2006. "I hope we can get the pipe running again," Shcherbo said. Belarussian refiners can process up to 22 million tons of crude per year.

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