THE Minister of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation has announced a plan to open two temporary holding centres for Cambodians deported from Thailand and Vietnam.

In remarks at the ministry Wednesday, Ith Sam Heng said the government would set up centres in Poipet and Svay Rieng.

"We are conducting the appropriate studies before selecting locations for the temporary centres, which will give an opportunity to people kicked out of Thailand and Vietnam to have somewhere to stay before contacting their families," he said.

Ith Sam Heng could not be reached Thursday to elaborate on plans for the centres, and several secretaries of state at the ministry declined to comment.

Ou Virak, president of the Cambodian Centre for Human Rights, said he approved of the idea of the centres but said they should be operated in a transparent manner to ensure that people who are held there are not subject to rights abuses.

But Rong Chhun, president of the Cambodian Independent Teachers Association, said he did not believe government money should be spent on the centres, arguing that there were not enough Cambodians deported each year to justify the expense.

Ith Sam Heng said in his remarks Wednesday that roughly 1,000 people could benefit from the holding centres each year.

Rong Chhun also called on the government to create more jobs in Cambodia so people would not feel compelled to move out of the country.