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# Armenia PM To Moscow To Discuss Cooperation Issues

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Armenian Prime Minister Serzh Sarkisyan is beginning an official visit to Moscow to discuss a broad spectrum of issues of Russian-Armenian cooperation in the political and economic spheres.

He will meet Russian Prime Minister Viktor Zubkov, hold talks on various aspects of bilateral relations and give a press conference at Itar-Tass.

It is the first visit to Russia paid by the current Armenian cabinet head who was appointed for the post in April. Sarkisyan retained the post of the head of the Armenian part of the intergovernmental commission on economic cooperation between Russia and Armenia.

The two countries' cooperation is developing on the bilateral and multilateral basis. Armenia, the same as Russia, is for the strengthening of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO).

Russia and Armenia have become reliable economic partners that found reflection in their treaty "on long-term economic cooperation for the period up to 2000," signed in September 2001 by Russian President Vladimir Putin and Armenian President Robert Kocharyan.

Russia today is the main trade partner of Armenia. Russia's Exports to the country are mainly nuclear fuel and equipment supplies for the Armenian nuclear power plant, energy resources, machinery and equipment. Food products, raw materials, unprocessed aluminium, as well as liquors and semi-precious stones and metals prevail in the structure of Russian imports from Armenia. About 70 Russian regions are maintaining bilateral economic relations with Armenia.

The volume of trade turnover between Russia and Armenia has doubled and may exceed 0.5 billion US dollars by the end of the year, Russian Acting Transport Minister Igor Levitin who heads the Russian part of the intergovernmental cooperation commission said in Armenia last week. He stated that Russian investments in the Armenian economy have also increased. In the first half of the year they amounted to 74 million dollars.

The lack of direct transport service between the two countries is the main obstacle to the development of Russian-Armenian economic cooperation. The Abkhazian section of the railway between Russia and Armenia is closed, therefore the main part of cargoes from Russia to Armenia is transported via the Black Sea through the Georgian Poti port and then by railway. Measures are currently being taken to increase the load on the Kavkaz-Poti ferry service.

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