
Armenia Becomes Theater Of Race Between Russia And West

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On February 4 the office of the European Commission to Baku was dedicated.

Benito Ferrero Valdner, EU commissar of foreign affairs and the European Neighborhood Policy, addressed the ceremony and said the office is an indicator of their attitude to Azerbaijan. She said the office will later be transformed into an EU mission.

A similar office is going to be set up in Yerevan. The Eurocrats are expected to say the same thing about the relation with Armenia and will say to expect active participation of Yerevan in the European Neighborhood Policy.

On these days the implementation of the Individual Partnership Plan with NATO is being discussed in Yerevan which was launched in January 2006. The possibility of adoption of an adapted program in 2008 is under consideration, in which the envisaged goals of NATO-Armenia cooperation will be included.

On February 5 the Russian Prime Minister Victor Zubkov arrived in Yerevan.

The negotiations with the Armenian government focus on economic cooperation, promotion of trade and economic ties between the two states and investments.

The Russian-Armenian cooperation over fuel and energy issues are to be discussed, which remain primary in the economic relations of the two countries.

Victor Zubkov noted that the Russian companies Gazprom, RAO EES, Russian Railways, Alrosa, Rusal, Systema, Vimpelcom, VTB Bank are already effectively working in Armenia. "Russia supplies Armenia's entire demand of natural gas, and contracts have been signed until 2009, there are no problems," informs the source of the Armenian government. According to him, currently the proposal of Armenia on the construction of an oil refinery together with Russia and Iran is under consideration. "There are lots of questions, including the supply of oil," the Russian prime minister said.

He added that currently the issue of connecting the electric grid of the country to the system of the CIS and Baltic states for a more effective transmission of electricity. Besides, he said Gazprom is interested in completing the fifth generating unit of the Thermal Power Plant of Hrazdan.

He reminded that the other four generating units belong to Russia. As to cooperation on atomic energy, Russia fulfills its commitment to supply nuclear fuel for the Armenian Nuclear Plant, the source added.

During Zubkov's visit to Yerevan bilateral agreements on nuclear cooperation may be signed, as well as a protocol on changes to the interstate agreement on free trade signed on October 30, 1992. Besides, the Russian ministry of information and communication and the Armenian ministry of transport and communication may sign an agreement on cooperation in IT, postal communication.

The Armenian newspapers already write that Armenia is becoming the theater of cooperation between the West and Russia. It became evident after pro-West Mikhail Sahakashvili was elected president of Georgia, and in Serbia pro-European Tadic won the presidential election. "Russia will lose in Armenia as well," forecasts the Armenian online newspaper Lagir.am.

On February 19 Armenia elects a president. The Russian newspapers refer to the Armenian Prime Minister Serge Sargsyan as the most "pro-Russian" candidate. Arthur Baghdasaryan is believed to be the most "pro-European" candidate, who is the second after Serge Sargsyan by his popular rating. The European observers are in Armenia, who have already reported drawbacks in the election campaign, preparing ground for not recognizing the outcome of the election.
