
Vinokurov: Exit From Transport Blockade To Bring Economic Breakthrough To Armenia

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YERERVAN - Yevgeny Vinokurov, the director of the Eurasian Bank's Center for Integration Studies, speaking Tuesday at a video press conference held for representatives of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia to present the results of the Eurasian Bank's Integration Barometer - 2013, said when Armenia gets out of the transport blockade and become a railway transit country, it will enjoy an economic breakthrough.

"The major task is to ensure a non-stop operation of the railway communication between Russia and Iran through Abkhazia and Georgia.

When it comes online it will enable Armenia to make a breakthrough to advance towards sustainable economic development. We consider this as the key long-term projects for Armenia's economy," he said.

The 556-km transport corridor from the southern Armenian town of Meghri, on the border with Iran, to Bavra in the north on the border with Georgia will open a gateway to the Black Sea. The North-South transport corridor will enable Armenia to mitigate the effects of the blockade imposed by Azerbaijan and Turkey.

The North -South transport corridor project was initiated by Russia and Iran. Armenia and Iran have also agreed at the highest level to consider the possibility of laying a railway link between the two countries that will become part of the transport corridor.

According to Vinokurov, normalization of Russian-Georgian relations is a key to the process of Armenia's accession to the Customs Union of Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus.

During a visit to Armenia in 2013 January Georgian Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili spoke about the possible revival of the railway link between Russia and Armenia through Abkhazia interrupted by the 1992-93 Georgian-Abkhazian war.

Vinokurov pointed out the decrease of the natural gas price and customs duties for rough diamonds and improvement of the labor migration situation among the advantages Armenia will have when joins the Customs Union.

Armenian and Russian presidents, Serzh Sargsyan and Vladimir Putin, made a joint statement on September 3, after they met in Moscow. It has become known from the statement that Armenia has decided to join the Customs Union and it intends to take part in formation of Eurasian Economic Union in the future. Putin said that the Russian Railway may invest about 15 billion rubles in development of Armenia's railway.

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