
SARKISIAN TOUTS ARMENIA'S 'SPECIAL' TIES WITH IRAN

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President Serzh Sarkisian has reaffirmed his desire to deepen Armenias relations with neighboring Iran in all areas of mutual interest.

Many prerequisites are in place for further development of the special relationship between our countries and peoples, Sarkisian told the Iranian daily Shargh in an interview published on Monday.

Our countries are the inheritors of ancient and rich civilizations of the region firmly linked to each other by millennia-old neighborhood, he said, according to the Armenpress news agency.

Armenian-Iranian relations, Sarkisian went on, are also based on a dialogue between Christianity and Islam, cultural similarities as well as common geopolitical interests. Both nations are builders of regional security, he declared.

Sarkisian will underline those relations when he flies to Tehran later this week to attend the inauguration ceremony of Irans recently reelected President Hassan Rouhani. The Armenian leader was also present at Rouhanis first inauguration in August 2013.

Our countries belong to the same culture and civilization, Rouhani said during an official visit to Yerevan in December. He also said that Iran will increase exports of natural gas to Armenia and deepen broader economic ties with its Christian neighbor.

Speaking to Shargh, Sarkisian stressed the importance of boosting bilateral commerce. He pointed to the ongoing construction of a new power transmission line, which should significantly increase Armenian electricity exports to the Islamic Republic, and the upcoming launch of a free economic zone on the Armenian-Iranian border.

Sarkisian further noted that ongoing negotiations on a free trade deal between Iran and the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) were initiated by his administration. Iranian investors could also take advantage of Armenias preferential trade regime with the European Union, he said.

Earlier this year, officials from Armenias Transport Ministry and national rail network encouraged Iranian businesspeople to use Armenian territory for shipping commercial freight to and from Europe. At a meeting in Yerevan, they presented financial and logistical details of the proposed transport corridor that would also pass through Georgia and the Black Sea.

In June 2016, Rouhani attended the signing in Tehran of an Armenian-Iranian agreement on visa-

free travel between citizens of the two states. In Sarkisians words, the number of Iranian tourists visiting Armenia has significantly risen since then.

There have also been signs of growing military cooperation between Yerevan and Tehran. Armenian Defense Minister Vigen Sargsian held talks with his Iranian counterpart Hossein Dehqan during an official visit to Iran in January. Sargsian referred to defense industry as a potential area of bilateral cooperation.

Kaynak/Source: