
ARMENIAN OUTGOING PRESIDENT SAYS MAY BECOME PM

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Armenia's outgoing President Serzh Sarksyan said on Monday he may be nominated for prime minister - an increasingly powerful position - following the election of his ally as president this month.

Parliament chose Armen Sarkissian, a former prime minister and ambassador to Britain, as president on March 2 in a vote that was meant to herald the start of a power shift to the prime minister and parliament.

Opposition leaders have accused Sarksyan of planning to become prime minister so as to continue governing Armenia, though he has denied any such intention until now.

"If we finally decide that I'm putting forward my candidacy (for the post of prime minister), it would be done with one reservation - that ... I will be paying more time to sharing experience with young leaders," Sarksyan told Armenian Internet media Tert.am.

Sarkissian's inauguration is set for April 9. After that, parliamentary parties will nominate candidates for prime minister and parliament will make a final choice on April 17.

Under the terms of an amended constitution approved in 2015 by a referendum, the presidency is meant to become largely ceremonial with real power gravitating towards the prime minister and parliament.

Armenia, a South Caucasus country of around three million people, is in line with some other former Soviet republics and countries in eastern Europe in moving away from direct democracy, according to many analysts.

The country seceded from the Soviet Union in 1991, but remains dependent on Russia for aid and investment. Many Armenians accuse the government of corruption and mishandling the economy.

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