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Yerevan, Baku Set For Fresh Talks On Transport Links

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Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigorian confirmed on Tuesday that he is due to meet with his Azerbaijani and Russian counterparts later this week for further talks on transport links between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The issue was apparently the main focus of the May 25 meeting in Moscow between Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinian and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev hosted by Russian President Vladimir Putin. The latter said the Russian, Armenian and Azerbaijani vice-premiers will try to iron out next week the remaining “purely technical” differences between Baku and Yerevan.

The main stumbling block is the status of road and rail links between Azerbaijan and its Nakhichevan exclave that would pass through Armenia’s Syunik province. Yerevan has ruled out any arrangement that would compromise Armenian sovereignty and control over those links.

“We have said countless times that this is our red line,” Grigorian told reporters.

“We are always ready to talk about transport communication, but we are not going to discuss [extraterritorial] corridors if that term presupposes a special regime,” he said.

Pashinian and Aliyev openly argued about the matter during a Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) summit held in Moscow earlier on May 25. Pashinian objected to Aliyev’s use of the term “Zangezur corridor,” saying it runs counter to the Russian-brokered ceasefire that stopped the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh and amounts to Azerbaijani territorial claims to Armenia.

“The word ‘corridor’ does not constitute a claim to anybody’s territory,” countered Aliyev.

At a separate meeting with Pashinian held shortly afterwards, Putin assured the Armenian leader that Baku unequivocally recognizes Armenian sovereignty over Syunik and that “any dual or triple interpretation of everything related to the possible unblocking of transport communication is baseless.”

Grigorian implied, however, that Baku has still not accepted Armenia over the planned highway and railway to Nakhichevan.