

EXPERT: DESPITE BEING ECONOMICALLY GROUNDLESS, PROJECT OF KARS-AKHALKALAKI RAILWAY MAY BE IMPLEMENTED

YEREVAN. <Despite the economic problems with the project of Kars-Akhalkalaki railway, one should not be skeptical about the prospects of its implementation. Meanwhile, the construction of the railway will be a political defeat of Armenia. It will mean that Armenia has failed to prevent the project in a diplomatic way and make Turkey to lift the blockade of the existing railway.> Chairman of the Association of Armenian Transport Workers and Forwarders Gagik Aghajanyan told ARMINFO.

Not only the three project participant-states, but also others, from China to Europe, are interested in the construction, he said.

Regarding the technical problems, Gagik Aghajanyan said some sections of the railway will be laid along the highland. Exploitation of the railway in winter period will require big expenses, which will be compensated by transportation of at least 150 carriages daily. Only 4-5 carriages can pass the slopes, which makes the project unprofitable. <Taking into account the practice of the political projects aiming Armenia's isolation, the inefficiency of Kars- Akhalkalaki railway will not stop its planners,> the expert said.

Aghajanyan thinks the project costs at least \$800 million, meanwhile the announced \$400 million aims to attract investors by all means possible. Taking into account the construction of some 130 km new section and repair of about 70 km old one, each kilometer will cost \$4 mln. <It was not accidental that once the tsarist Russia laid Kars-Gyumri and not Kars-Akhalkalaki railway,> he thinks.

To note, Turkey, Georgia and Azerbaijan have already agreed to construct Kars-Akhalkalaki-Tbilisi railway. The new section will replace the idling Kars- Gyumri-Tbilisi railway. Official Yerevan is against the project.