

India-Azerbaijan Bilateral Relations

India and Azerbaijan have close friendly relations and growing bilateral cooperation based on old historical relations and shared traditions. The Ateshgah fire temple in the vicinity of Baku is a fine example. This medieval monument with Devanagari and Gurmukhi wall inscriptions is a symbol of the age-old relationship between the two countries when Indian merchants heading towards Europe through the Great Silk Route used to visit Azerbaijan. In the recent past, President Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and film star Raj Kapoor had visited Baku. Famous Azerbaijani artist Rashid Behbudov, a close friend of Raj Kapoor promoted Azeri music in India and Indian music in Azerbaijan. Famous singer Elmira Rahimova spent two years studying Indian music/dance in India in the late 1950s.

Diplomatic relations:

India recognized Azerbaijan in December 1991. Diplomatic relations with Azerbaijan were established on 28th February, 1992. An Indian resident mission was opened in Baku in March 1999. Azerbaijan opened its first resident mission in New Delhi in October, 2004. The leadership of India and Azerbaijan are keen to form a reliable, strong, vibrant and mutually beneficial partnership with each-other.

Bilateral agreements:

An agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation was signed in June, 1998. An Agreement to establish the India-Azerbaijan Intergovernmental Commission (IGC) on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technological Cooperation was signed in April 2007. Air Service Agreement and a Protocol of Intergovernmental Commission were signed in April 2012. Agreements on Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) in Civil & Commercial Matters and Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty in Criminal Matters and Extradition Treaty were signed in April 2013. A Protocol on Cooperation between the Foreign Ministries of India and Azerbaijan was signed in May 2013. Agreements on visa exemption regime for diplomatic, official and service passport holders, Bilateral Investment Treaty, Double Taxation avoidance, and for cooperation in the areas of ICT, Health, Culture, and Tourism are under discussions. A Protocol on Exchange of Instruments of Ratification of MLAT on Civil & Commercial Matters was signed on 29 February 2016.

India-Azerbaijan Intergovernmental Joint Commission:

Pursuant to an agreement signed in 2007, India-Azerbaijan Intergovernmental Commission (IGC) on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technological Cooperation has held four sessions: in New Delhi (26 Nov 2009), Baku (16 Apr 2012), New Delhi (24-25 Feb 2014) and Baku (25-26 October 2016). The bilateral discussions in the Inter-Governmental Commission covers bilateral cooperation in a wide range of fields, including trade and investment, transportation energy, chemicals and fertilizer, agriculture, financial sector, science & technology, ICT, health care and pharmaceuticals, education, culture, youth and sports, visa free travel, transfer of sentenced persons and tourism. The fourth meeting of the Inter-Governmental Commission was co-Chaired by Mr. Sunil Kumar, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and Industry from Indian side and Mr. Gulmammad Javadov, Deputy Minister of Energy from Azerbaijan side.

High Level visits from India to Azerbaijan:

- ✓ Mr. Mani Shankar Aiyar, Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas, visited Baku on 9-10 June, 2005.
- ✓ Mr. Mani Shankar Aiyar again visited Baku in September, 2007 as Minister of Panchayati Raj, Youth Affairs & North Eastern Region to participate in the Conference on Dialogue Among Civilizations at the invitation of the ruling Yeni Azerbaijan Party.
- ✓ In April 2007, Mr. Jairam Ramesh, Minister of State for Commerce and Industry visited Baku for setting up of the Inter-Governmental Commission (IGC) on Trade, Economic, Technological Cooperation between India and Azerbaijan.
- ✓ Shri Sanjay Singh, Secretary (East), MEA, visited Baku for 3rd FOC held on 28th September, 2011.
- ✓ Mr. Jyotiraditya M. Scindia, MOS, Commerce and Industry visited Baku for 2nd IGC meeting held on 16 April, 2012.

- ✓ Mr. Ajay Maken, Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports led a youth delegation to Azerbaijan from June 27-29, 2012 to participate in the first "Great Silk Way" International Youth Congress and Festival.
- ✓ Mr. Kapil Sibal, Minister for Communications and IT led a delegation to Baku on November 3-4, 2012 to participate in the Internet Governance Forum (IGF).
- ✓ A 9-member Parliamentary delegation, consisting of MPs from Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, visited Baku to attend the 10th Annual Conference of Parliamentary Network on the World Bank and IMF (PNOW) on 24-25 May, 2013.
- ✓ A 20-member Parliamentary delegation of India visited Baku on 6-10 October 2013 as Observer during the Presidential elections in Azerbaijan at the invitation of Association for Civil Society Development in Azerbaijan.
- ✓ Mr. Arun Jaitley, Finance Minister accompanied by Mr. Rajiv Mehrishi, Finance Secretary and other members of the delegation visited Baku on 4-5 May, 2015 to attend the 48th Annual General Meeting of the Board of Governors of Asian Development Bank (ADB).
- ✓ Ms. Sujata Mehta, Secretary(West) visited Baku (27-29 July) to hold the Foreign Office Consultations with Deputy Foreign Minister Khalaf Khalafov of Azerbaijan on 28 July 2016.
- ✓ Mr. Sunil Kumar, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and Industry visited Baku and co-chaired the 4th Meeting of IGC held on 25-26 October 2016.

High Level visits from Azerbaijan:

- ✓ Mr. A. Alekperov, Minister of Finance of Azerbaijan visit Delhi on 9-12 January 2006.
- ✓ Mr. Khalaf Khalafov, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan visit India for FOC in March 2007.
- ✓ Mr. Huseyngulu Baghirov, Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources visited New Delhi for first IGC meeting held on 26 November 2009.
- ✓ Mr. Natig Aliyev, Minister of Energy visited India on October 9-10, 2012;
- ✓ Mr. Fikrat Mammadov, Minister for Justice visited India on April 3-6, 2013;
- ✓ Mr. Samir Sharifov, Minister of Finance visited India on May 2, 2013,
- ✓ Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister of Foreign Affairs visited India on May 3, 2013
- ✓ Mr. Natig Aliyev, Minister of Energy visited Delhi on 12-15 January 2014 to attend PETROTECH 2014.
- ✓ Mr. Huseyngulu Baghirov, Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources visited India on 24-25 February 2014 for 3rd IGC meeting.
- ✓ A Member of Parliament, Dr. Ganira Pashayeva, a member of India-Azerbaijan Inter-Parliamentary Friendship Group visited New Delhi on 20-26 September 2014 to attend 3rd International Symposium of Turkic Art, History and Folklore.
- ✓ Mr. Kamaladdin Heydarov, Minister of Emergency Situations of Azerbaijan participated in the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held at New Delhi on 2-5 November, 2016.
- ✓ Mr. Gaya Mammadov, Head of the International Security Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs participated in the Heart of Asia Senior Officials Meeting and Ministerial Conference on 3-4 December 2016.

Bilateral Trade and commerce:

Over the years, the bilateral trade has increased substantially from around US\$ 50 million in 2005 to around US\$ 305 million in 2015. This jump in bilateral trade coincided with the opening of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline to the Mediterranean port, from where; Indian oil companies have been buying substantive quantities of crude oil. The primary import of India from Azerbaijan is crude oil. The important items of direct and indirect imports from India are rice, drugs, clothes and textiles, tea, meat, , refrigerators, electronic cards, machine parts and other plant equipment.

Bilateral Trade with India (January-December 2015):	
Azerbaijan's Imports from India	US\$ 35 million
Azerbaijan's Export to India	US\$ 270 million
Total Bilateral Trade	US \$ 305 million

Indian Investment in Oil and Gas Sector of Azerbaijan

The ONGC Videsh Limited (OVL) of India acquired shares worth US\$ 1 billion in development project of the Azeri-Chirag-Gunashli (2.72%) oil field and the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipe line (2.36%) from US Company Hess in March 2013 and has established an office in Baku.

The Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan (SOCAR) to jointly pursue LNG opportunities through capacity booking, LNG procurement and promotion of LNG projects globally.

Exchange of Business Delegations

A Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) business delegation visited Baku from February 19-22, 2012 and held India-Azerbaijan Business Forum (Feb 20, 2012) in collaboration with AZPROMO. Another business forum was held on March 14, 2013 in collaboration with National Confederation of Entrepreneurs (Employees) Organization, Baku. GOI Tourism Office Frankfurt participated for the fifth time in the 15th Azerbaijan International Travel and Tourism (AIFT) held in Baku on April 7-9, 2016.

CII organized "Enterprise India Show" at Baku from 27 to 29 March, 2015 in collaboration with M/s ANM Exhibitions Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi. M/s ANM Exhibitions Pvt. Ltd. regularly organizes "Indian Exhibition" in Baku. Four such exhibitions displaying a variety of Indian products, such as garments, jewellery, furniture, handicraft, food items, souvenirs, etc. were held from 27th March to 12 April, 2015, from 1-18 Oct 2015, from 8 March to 27 March 2016 and from 2 to 25 September, 2016.

Indian Companies regularly participate in business exhibitions in Azerbaijan. Recently Indian enterprises participated in the 22nd Azerbaijan International Food Industry Exhibition/ World Food Azerbaijan 2016 (19-21 May, 2016); 23rd Caspian Oil & Gas exhibition (1-4 June, 2016); and 22nd Azerbaijan International Healthcare Exhibition (19-21 September 2016). In 2015, a delegation from the Federation of Indian Exporters Organization (FIEO) participated in Baku Build Exhibition (21-24 October 2015) with a team of 28 companies showcasing diverse range of products of building and construction.

Cultural exchanges:

The cultural exchanges over ages between Azerbaijan and India have led to close cultural affinity and shared traditions. World renowned Azerbaijani poet Nizami Ganjavi had a profound influence on eminent Indian poets like Amir Khusrau. The late Rashid Behbudov, a noted tenor who switched to singing popular Azeri songs in European classical tradition was a close friend of late Raj Kapoor. Behbudov, Elmira Rahimova and other artists have been instrumental in popularizing Indian music and songs in Azerbaijan.

Indian cinema continues to have a large following and Azeri language TV channels screen Hindi films periodically, including the new *Bollywood* cinema as well as the older movies of Raj Kapoor, Amitabh Bachhan, Mithun Chakraborty, Hema Malini, etc. A student from Azerbaijan studied at the FTTI, Pune for B.A course.

Hindustani raga exponent, Indrani Mukherjee from Kolkata participated at the Second International Mugham Festival held in Baku in March 2011. The 150th Birth Anniversary of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore was celebrated at Baku on May 6, 2011 at a scientific seminar organized by the Institute of Literature named after Nizami. A Tagore scholar from Viswa-Bharati University, Shantiniketan, Prof. Abhijit Sen, participated in the event. The Indian scholar also interacted with the students and faculty

of the Azerbaijan University of Languages. Indian Council of Cultural relations (ICCR) sponsored the visit of Aman and Ayan Ali Khan, Sarod exponents for the Silk Way Music Festival held in Baku in late June 2011.

The 870th anniversary of Nizami Ganjavi celebrations were held in Azerbaijan and India during 2012. In the context of Sufism as a strong bond of cultural relations between India, Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey and Central Asia, Dr. Karimov and Dr. Parvin from the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, Baku participated in the International Seminar on Indo-Iranian Cultural Heritage organized by University of Gawahati on 2-4 February, 2012.

Cooperation in Education

Under the Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme, the Government of India offers ten fully-paid training courses to professionals from Azerbaijan every year India also provides two scholar slots every year to Azerbaijani students under the General Scholarship Scheme of the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR). A Hindi teaching Center has been functioning in the Azerbaijan University of Languages (AUL) since October 2010 with support from the ICCR. At present 30 Azerbaijani students are learning Hindi as an elective subject. Two students from Azerbaijan have completed a special course for foreigners at Kendriya Hindi Sansthan, Agra. On return, one student has been absorbed by the AUL as a Hindi language teacher.

Recent Events:

On the occasion of 2nd International Day of Yoga on 21 June, Embassy of India launched (21 June) Yoga Week, 21-26 June with an open-air Yoga session at the historical complex at 'Ateshgah' at Surakhani near Baku which was attended by several Yoga practitioners and enthusiasts from Azerbaijan. The Embassy in collaboration with Azerbaijan University of Languages (AUL) celebrated 125th birth anniversary of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar (14 April), Hindi Diwas and Gandhi Jayanti (30 Sept). The Embassy of India celebrated 141st Birth Anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel (4th Nov) and Constitution Day (23 Nov) in the Chancery premises.

The Embassy celebrated the Indian Technical and Educational Cooperation (ITEC) Day in Baku (16 Dec) at Hotel Hyatt Regency which was attended by around 40 ITEC alumni as well as 40 members of Indian business community. The Embassy of India, Baku in association with India Association Azerbaijan celebrated the Pravasi Bhartiya Divas 2016 & World Hindi Day 2016 on 9th January, 2016.

Indian Community:

The Indian community in Azerbaijan comprises of about 1700 persons, including professionals employed with international companies in the oil and gas sectors, businessmen engaged in commodities trading, catering and restaurant business and construction workers on short-term contracts. There are two Indian associations, viz., Indian Association Azerbaijan (IAA) and Baku Malayalee Association (BMA) which work in close association with the Embassy of India in Baku. They regularly hold social events to celebrate major Indian festivals and events. The Indian community which is in the 4th/5th place in Azerbaijan, in terms of numerical strength, is very active both professionally and socially and has integrated well with the local population. Dr. Suchita Seth, member of the IAA, publishes a Hindi Magazine „Namaste Baku“.

Useful Resources:

Embassy of India website : www.indianembassybaku.in

Embassy of India facebook page: www.facebook.com/indianinazerbaijan

Embassy of India Youtube channel: www.youtube.com/user/indianembassybaku.

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