India and Azerbaijan have close friendly relations and growing bilateral cooperation based on old historical relations and shared traditions. This medieval monument with Devanagri 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 Azeri 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, Promotion and Protection of bilateral investments, Double Taxation avoidance, and for cooperation in the areas of Transportation, Health, Culture, Tourism and Education 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 three sessions: in New Delhi (26 Nov 2009), Baku (16 Apr 2012) and New Delhi (24-25 Feb 2014). 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 Third meeting of the Inter-Governmental Commission was co-Chaired by Dr. E.M.S. Natchiappan, MoS (C&I) from Indian side and Mr. Huseyngulu Baghirov, Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources from Azerbaijan side. The next meeting of India-Azerbaijan Intergovernmental Joint Commission is scheduled to take place in Baku on 6-7 April 2016 and would discuss measures for further.

**Recent Bilateral visits:**
As two friendly countries enjoying close relations, India and Azerbaijan regularly exchange visits by official and business delegations.
Some of the recent visits from India to Azerbaijan were:

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 on 24-25 May, 2013; A six member Indian delegation led by Shri Ravi Capoor, Joint Secretary MOC visited Baku to participate in the 5th Coordination Council Meeting of International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) on June 24-25, 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. Dr. G. Sreekumar Menon, DG, National Academy of Customs, Excise and narcotics, Ministry of Finance visited Baku to participate in the inaugural INCU Global Conference 2014 “Trade facilitation Post-Bali: Putting Policy into Practice” on 21-25 May 2014. A 2-member Indian delegation led by Mr. Ved Prakesh Dudeja, Executive Director, Ministry of Railway, Government of India visited Baku to attend the International Conference on “Baku-Tbilisi- Kars Railway link – new opportunities in the development of the historic Silk Road” on October 15-16, 2014. Young Presidents’ Organisation, Bombay Chapter, India organized its Annual Retreat in Baku on 16 April 2014 in which about 30 businessmen from India participated in the event. On 29 April 2015, Shri Rohit Sharma, Zonal Director, NCB Zonal Unit Delhi visited Baku to attend the Counter Narcotics Confidence Building Measures Regional Tech. Group Meeting.

On May 4-5, Shri Arun Jaitley, Finance Minister accompanied by a delegation visited Baku to attend 48th Annual General Meeting of the Board of Governors of Asian Development Bank.

Notable recent visits from Azerbaijan to India were:

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; and Mr. Huseyngulu Baghirov, Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources visited India on 24-25 February 2014.

A 3-member delegation led by Chairperson of the State Committee for Problems of Family, women and Children Hijran Huseynova participated in 6th International Women’s Conference on 7-9 February 2014 in Bangalore. 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.

Bilateral Trade and commerce:

Over the years, the bilateral trade has increased substantially from around US$ 50 million in 2005 to around US$ 250 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 drugs, cars, clothes and textiles, tea, meat, food processing equipment, electronic cards, boilers and other plant equipment.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Bilateral Trade with India (January-December 2015):</th>
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<tr>
<td>Azerbaijan’s Imports from India</td>
<td>US$ 35 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Azerbaijan’s Export to India</td>
<td>US$ 270 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Bilateral Trade</strong></td>
<td>US$ 305 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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


Another business forum was held on March 14, 2013 in collaboration with National Confederation of Entrepreneurs (Employees) Organization, Baku. GOI Tourism Office Frankfurt and three tour operators from India participated for the fourth time in the 14th Azerbaijan International Travel and Tourism (AIFT) held in Baku on April 2-4, 2015.

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. Three 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 and from 8 March to 27 March 2016.

Indian Companies regularly participate in business exhibitions in Azerbaijan. Recently Indian enterprises participated in the 21st Azerbaijan International Food Industry Exhibition/ World Food Azerbaijan 2015, held at the Baku Expo Centre from 21 to 23 May, 2015; and 9th Azerbaijan International Beauty and Aesthetic Medicine Exhibitions held at Baku Expo Centre from 18 - 20 September, 2015. 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 Bachchan, 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:
The Embassy of India celebrated the “First International Day of Yoga” on 21 June 2015 at the Ambassador Hotel, Baku. The Embassy in collaboration with Azerbaijan University of Languages (AUL) hosted a panel discussion to mark the 65 Anniversary of the Constitution Day of India (26 Nov).

The Embassy celebrated the Indian Technical and Educational Cooperation (ITEC) Day in Baku (18 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 first Pravasi Bhartiya Divas 2016 & World Hindi Day 2016 on 9th January, 2016.

The Embassy of India represented India at ‘Tea Culture of Countries’ exhibition organized by Azerbaijan International Cuisine Centre (20 Oct 2015), II International Rice Festival (11 Dec 2015), the 5th "International Festival" organized by the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy (ADA) (20 Nov 2015) and 'International Day' organised at Azerbaijan University of Oil and Industry (19 Dec).

Indian Community:
There are about 2000 Indians residing in Azerbaijan, 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 Malyalee 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’.

V) Useful Resources:
Embassy of India website : www.indianembassybaku.in
Embassy of India facebook page: www.facebook.com/indianembassy.baku
Embassy of India Youtube channel: www.youtube.com/user/indianembassybaku.

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March 2016