

**Embassy of India
Baku (Azerbaijan)**

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. A Protocol on Exchange of Instruments of Ratification of MLAT on Civil & Commercial Matters was signed on 29 February 2016. An Agreement on visa exemption regime for diplomatic, official and service passport holders and an MOU for cooperation between FSI and ADA were signed during the visit of EAM to Baku in April 2018. Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) between India and Azerbaijan for the year 2019-2023 was signed in October 2018 during IGC meeting in New Delhi. Negotiations are underway for Bilateral Investment Treaty, Double Taxation avoidance agreement, Transfer of Sentenced Persons and for cooperation in the areas of ICT, Health, Agriculture, Youth & Sports and Renewable Energy.

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), Baku (25-26 October 2016) and New Delhi (11-12 October, 2018). 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, transfer of sentenced persons and tourism. The fifth meeting of the Inter-Governmental Commission was co-Chaired by Mr. Suresh Prabhu, Minister of Commerce and Industry from Indian side and Mr. Mukhtar Babayev, Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources 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.
- ✓ Mr. M.J. Akbar, Minister of State for External Affairs participated in the 7th Ministerial conference of the Heart of Asia – Istanbul Process (HOA-IP) held in Baku on 1 December 2017.
- ✓ External Affairs Minister, Smt. Sushma Swaraj, visited Baku to attend the NAM Ministerial Conference and for the bilateral visit on 4-6 April 2018.
- ✓ A joint Parliamentary delegation consisting of three MPs visited Baku to participate

in the 100th anniversary of Azerbaijani Parliament in Baku on 19-22 September 2018.

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.
- ✓ Mr. Samir Sharifov, Minister of Finance, visited India on 21 February 2018 seek India's support for their candidature for hosting IMF/ World Bank meetings in Baku in 2021.

Bilateral Trade and commerce:

Over the years, the bilateral trade has increased substantially from around US\$ 50 million in 2005 to around US\$ 463 million in 2017. The primary import of India from Azerbaijan is crude oil. The important items of direct and indirect imports from India are rice, machine parts & other plant equipment, drugs, clothes and textiles, meat, food stuff and tea.

Bilateral Trade with India (2017):	
Azerbaijan's Imports from India	US\$ 97 million
Azerbaijan's Export to India	US\$ 366 million
Total Bilateral Trade	US \$ 463 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.

Groundbreaking ceremony for Sun Pharma plant for production of solid consistency drugs in Sumgayit was held on 13 July, 2017. Economy Minister Shahin Mustafayev took part in the ceremony. The plant will produce medicines for cardiology, nephrology, gastroenterology and diabetes.

Exchange of Business Delegations

The Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) has signed MOUs for cooperation with the National Confederation of Entrepreneurs (Employees) Organization (ASK). The Federation of Chamber of Commerce and Industry of India has signed MOU with the Azerbaijan Chamber of Commerce, Baku. Indian companies regularly participate in major business fairs and exhibitions in Azerbaijan. Regular business delegations are exchanged between the two sides. PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) organized a Business exhibition 'Best of India Show' and Business Forum in Baku from 13-16 March 2018 in collaboration with the National Confederation of Entrepreneurs (Employees) Organization (ASK). PHDCCI also signed MOUs for cooperation with ASK and Azerbaijan Chamber of Commerce. Embassy has organized a seminar on Medical tourism to India in collaboration with leading Medical Hospitals of India like Fortis, Max and Artemis in Baku on 28 March 2018.

A delegation led by Chairman of Azercosmos visited India on 27-28 February 2018 and met with the Chairman of ISRO and CMD of ANTRIX and discussed possible areas of cooperation between the two sides. A two-member delegation from ISRO/ANTRIX visited Azerbaijan from 21 to 24 June, 2018 and met with Chairman of Azercosmos. The two sides held detailed discussions on cooperation in the areas of remote sensing applications, training requirements and signing of MoU between Azercosmos and Antrix.

Sun Pharma held groundbreaking ceremony for building a plant in joint venture with Gilan for production of solid consistency drugs in Sumgayit on 13 July, 2017. A 4-member delegation from WAPCOS limited led by Mr. R.K. Gupta, Chairman and Managing Director visited Azerbaijan from 18-21 November, 2017. The Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) and Azerbaijan Tourism Association (MTA) signed (2 Feb 2018) a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for cooperation during the international tourism fair SATTE 2018 held in Delhi. Kalinga Motor Sports Club (KMSC) of India with the support of Government of India organized a major rally of motor cars from India to Iran, Azerbaijan and then to Russia during May 2018 to popularize the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) route.

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. In recent past, the famous Azerbaijani artist 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. Famous singer Elmira Rahimova spent two years studying Indian music/dance in India in the late 1950s. These artists were instrumental in popularizing Indian music and songs in Azerbaijan. Indian intellectuals like Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore are well known in Azerbaijan and his Birth Anniversary is regularly celebrated by local organizations.

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. Indian music and dance groups sponsored by the Indian Council of Cultural relations (ICCR) regularly participate in music and dance festivals in Azerbaijan. Yoga is immensely popular in Azerbaijan and the International Day of Yoga on 21 June is attended by several Yoga practitioners and enthusiasts from Azerbaijan with much enthusiasm.

Cooperation in Education

Under the Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme, the Government of India offers twenty fully-paid training courses to professionals from Azerbaijan every year. India also provides one scholar slot 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 which has deployed a Hindi Chair at the Center. ICCR Chair which was discontinued in 2013 has been revived recently and a new Hindi teacher, Dr. Roopali Sinha has joined in November 2017 and is conducting Hindi classes. At present, 20 Azerbaijani students are learning Hindi as an elective subject. Some students from Azerbaijan have completed a special course for foreigners at Kendriya Hindi Sansthan, Agra. AUL has also sought setting up of a Sanskrit Chair. The Proposal for Sanskrit Chair has been included in ICCR's Plan of Action for 2018-19. Baku State University has also sought setting up of Hindi Chair. Mission is working on a proposal to seek ICCR's approval for appointment of a Hindi Chair at the Baku State University.

Recent Events:

On the occasion of 4rd International Day of Yoga on 21 June, Embassy of India launched Yoga Week, 17-24 June 2018 and Yoga events in different cities and iconic locations of Azerbaijan were organized by the Mission in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan and local Yoga schools and institutions in Azerbaijan. The Embassy of India celebrated Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, World Hindi Divas [09.01.2018], Ambedkar Jayanti [14.04.2018], Birth Anniversary of Gururdev Rabindranath Tagore [03.05.2018], Gandhi Jayanti [2.10.2018]. The Mission organized cultural events (sponsored by ICCR) on 15.08.2018 to mark the 72nd Independence Day of India celebrations.

Indian Community:

The Indian community in Azerbaijan comprises of about 1000 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.gov.in

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

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

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