

Brief on India-Azerbaijan Bilateral Relations

India and Azerbaijan have friendly relations and growing bilateral cooperation based on civilizational linkages, cultural affinities and shared values of understanding and respect for other cultures.

Historical relations

2. The 'Ateshgah' fire temple in the vicinity of Baku is a fine example of the age-old historical relations and cultural exchanges between India and Azerbaijan. This 18th century monument, with a much older history, has wall inscriptions in Devanagiri and Gurmukhi, and is a surviving proof of the trade links and hospitality that Indian merchants on the Silk Route to Europe enjoyed in Azerbaijani cities such as Baku and Ganja.

3. During the period Azerbaijan was a part of the erstwhile Soviet Union, India's ties with Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic were primarily through Moscow. India's Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore, former President Dr. S. Radhakrishnan (as Vice President in 1956) and former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru (in 1961) visited the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic.

4. India recognized Azerbaijan as an independent country in December 1991 soon after it proclaimed its independence from the USSR formally in October 1991. Diplomatic relations with Azerbaijan were established on 28 February 1992. The resident Indian Mission was opened in Baku in March 1999. Azerbaijan opened its resident Mission in New Delhi in October 2004.

Political Relations with India

5. India-Azerbaijan relations are friendly and growing. Hon'ble Vice President of India, Mr. M. Venkaiah Naidu, visited Baku for the NAM Summit from 24-26 October 2019, accompanied by Hon'ble External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar. Former External Affairs Minister of India, Mrs. Sushma Swaraj, visited Azerbaijan on 4-6 April 2018 for attending the NAM Ministerial Conference and for a bilateral visit. Earlier, Minister of State for External Affairs, Shri M.J. Akbar, visited Baku (30 Nov-01 Dec 2017) to attend Ministerial Meeting of the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process. Finance Minister Shri Arun Jaitley visited Baku in May 2015 to attend the Annual General Meeting of the Board of Governors of Asian Development Bank (ADB). Hon'ble Prime Minister participated in the online NAM Summit on the theme "United against COVID-19" held at the initiative of Azerbaijani President H.E Mr. Ilham Aliyev on 04 May 2020. Similarly, Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Dr. Harshvardan, participated in the online meeting of NAM Health Ministers held on 20 May 2020 and on 27 May 2021 to discuss the COVID-19 preparedness.

6. There have been several Ministerial level visits from Azerbaijan to India since 1991. Azerbaijani Foreign Minister H.E. Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov paid a bilateral visit to India

in May 2013. Deputy Minister of Economy, H.E. Sahid Mammadov, visited India to participate in the Vibrant Gujarat Summit-2019 from 16-19 January, 2019. H.E. Mr. Mukhtar Babayev, Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources, visited Delhi to attend the 5th Inter-Governmental Commission (IGC) on 11-12 October 2018. H.E. Mr. Samir Sharifov, Minister of Finance visited India on 21 February 2018. H.E. 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. H.E. Mr. Nagif Hamzayev, Member of Parliament, visited India under ICCR's Distinguished Visitors' Programme in August 2019.

Parliamentary Cooperation

7. The Parliament of India and Milli Majlis (unicameral Parliament of Azerbaijan) have had inter-parliamentary contacts. A 20-member Indian Parliamentary delegation visited Baku on 6-10 October 2013 as Observers during the Presidential elections in Azerbaijan at the invitation of Association for Civil Society Development in Azerbaijan. A joint Parliamentary delegation consisting of three Members of Parliament visited Baku on 12-22 Sept 2018 to attend the 100th anniversary of Azerbaijani Parliament. Azerbaijan formed an Azerbaijan-India Working Group on Inter-Parliamentary Relations in May 2020 with H.E. Mr. Nagif Hamzayev, MP, as its Head.

Cooperation in Agriculture

8. The two countries have been exploring mutually beneficial cooperation in a number of areas, including agriculture. As decided during the 5th Meeting of the India-Azerbaijan Intergovernmental Commission held in New Delhi in October 2018, Department of Agricultural Research and Education of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare deputed an expert on cotton to Azerbaijan from 27 October to 02 November 2019 to explore collaboration with Azerbaijan in cotton cultivation. During the visit, various issues were discussed identifying constraints and sought collaboration in several areas of research.

Bilateral Agreements

9. India and Azerbaijan signed an agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation in June, 1998. The 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. Negotiations

are underway for Bilateral Investment Treaty, Double Taxation avoidance, and for cooperation in the areas of ICT, Health, Agriculture, Tourism, Customs matters, Youth & Sport and Tourism.

Economic and Commercial

10. Over the years, India's bilateral trade with Azerbaijan increased substantially from around US\$ 50 million in 2005 to around US\$ 1093 million in 2019, however, due to COVID-19 pandemic, it decreased to US\$ 583 million in 2020. It has shown some increase in the first half of 2021 amounting to US\$ 431 million (Jan-Jun 2021). The important items of direct and indirect imports from India to Azerbaijan are rice, mobile phones, drugs/human vaccine, centrifugal liquid pumps, taps & valves, kali & natrium bromide, devices and equipment of automatic regulation & control, meat, mechanical spades & excavators, stones, tiles & granites etc. The primary export from Azerbaijan to India is crude oil. Other items of export from Azerbaijan to India are iodine, jet fuel and plants for perfumes. In terms of Indian investment in Azerbaijan, ONGC Videsh Ltd acquired shares worth about US\$ 1 billion in March 2013 in development project of the Azeri-Chirag-Gunashli (2.72%) oil field and the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipe line (2.36%).

11. Due to COVID-19 related restrictions, the Mission in coordination with various Export Promotion Councils and Chambers of Commerce regularly organised virtual B2B meeting and webinars during 2020 and 2021 with the participation of Indian and Azerbaijani businesspersons to promote cooperation in rice, pharmaceuticals, spices, ceramic sectors etc. 'Best of India - Indian Product Trade Show' is organized in Baku by ANM Exhibitions Pvt. Ltd. in March and September every year with the participation of more than 60 Indian companies. The last exhibition was held in March 2020.

12. Azerbaijan is an important player in INSTC route connecting India with Russia & Europe through Azerbaijan & Iran. Mission coordinated Azerbaijan's participation at the 'Chabahar Day' on the margins of the Maritime Indian Summit on 04 March 2021. The Mission organized a virtual Seminar on India-Azerbaijan cooperation under INSTC' together with FICCI in June 2021. The first train carrying thirty two 40-ft containers from Finland to Mumbai on INSTC route, traveled through Azerbaijan in June 2021.

13. The Mission organised a number of online presentations and screened tourism promotion videos with Azerbaijani subtitles at Embassy's social media handles. The Mission organised an online Business Interaction and Presentation on India's Budget 2021 in February 2021. Three videos on Indian states were prepared with Azerbaijani subtitles and displayed at LED billboard in Baku city center during March 2021.

Bilateral Trade with India (in million US\$)	Jan-Dec 2020	Jan-Jun 2021
Azerbaijan's imports from India	126	79
Azerbaijan's Export to India	457	352
Total bilateral Trade	583	431

Cooperation in capacity building and education

14. Under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme, the Government of India offers about 30 fully-paid training courses to professionals from Azerbaijan every year. In 2020-21, over 50 Azerbaijani officials participated in e-ITEC programmes organised by the Government of India. India also provides scholar slots every year to Azerbaijani students under the General Scholarship Scheme of the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR). Azerbaijani diplomats are also trained under the Professional Course for Foreign Diplomats (PCFD) in India. A Hindi teaching Center with the support of ICCR functioned at the Azerbaijan University of Languages (AUL) between October 2010 and November 2019. An India Centre is also functioning in the Institute of Literature of Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences (ANAS). Government of India sponsored the visits of Indian experts from Kudumbashree, a Kerala based NGO, to Azerbaijan for supporting a project by the Azerbaijan Rural Investment Project (AzRIP) of the Ministry of Agriculture for economic empowerment of women in Azerbaijan. The Kudumbashree team visited Azerbaijan from 10-20 March 2018 and from 6-17 September 2018 and conducted workshops in Masalli, Balakan and Lankaran regions of Azerbaijan. Mission documented a video on “Kudumbashree – Women Empowerment Programme” in Azerbaijani language with English subtitles in April 2021.

Cultural exchanges:

15. 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. Indian intellectuals like Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore are well known in Azerbaijan and his Birth Anniversary is regularly celebrated by local organizations. A Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) was signed between India and Azerbaijan on 12 October 2018 during the 5th IGC held in New Delhi.

Cultural Events:

16. Embassy of India has been organizing cultural events to promote Indian culture, cuisine, movies, songs and dances in Azerbaijan including performances by cultural troupes sent by Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR). Since 2015, Embassy has been celebrating the International Day of Yoga (IDY) in June by organizing several yoga-related events. IDY celebrations of 2020 and 2021 were celebrated by organising a number of Yoga events, mostly online in view of the requirement of social distancing in the wake of COVID-19. As part of the celebrations of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi in 2019, Embassy organized various events including painting exhibition, seminars, planting of trees, global cycling event and issuing a postal stamp on Mahatma Gandhi by 'Azermarka'.

17. An Azerbaijan based Indian citizen, Dr. Rajani Chandra D'Mello was conferred Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award - 2021 for her work in the field of medicine. Embassy organized events as part of the celebrations of the 550th Birth Anniversary of Guru Nanak Devji and 160th Birth Anniversary of Gurudev Ravindranath Tagore. Mission has organized a number of events as part of celebration of Constitution Day and Campaign on Citizens' Duties between November 2019 and November 2020.

India@75

18. As part of the ongoing celebrations of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav, India@75, the Mission has been organising several events in coordination with various Azerbaijani institutes and Indian community associations in Azerbaijan. The Mission in collaboration with the Azerbaijani University of Languages, launched 'Little Guru' app for learning Sanskrit language and also organised an Essay Writing Competition on India@75 theme. The Mission in collaboration with the Gobustan National Historical Artistic Preserve, opened an Indian Gallery at Gobustan in July 2021 showing heritage sites of India.

Evacuation of Indian nationals:

19. Mission evacuated 66 Indian nationals to Delhi via Tbilisi (Georgia) on 30 June 2020 by the Vande Bharat Mission flight. Travel by road to Azerbaijan-Georgia border was facilitated by the Mission.

Indian Community:

20. The Indian community in Azerbaijan comprises of more than 700 people, 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 four Indian associations in Azerbaijan, viz., Indian Association Azerbaijan (IAA), Baku Malyalee Association (BMA), Baku Tamil Sangam and Azerbaijan Telugu Association (ATA), which work in close association with the Embassy. They regularly hold social events to celebrate major Indian festivals and events. The Indian community is very active both professionally and socially and has integrated well with the local population.

Useful Resources:

Embassy of India website : www.indianembassybaku.gov.in

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

Embassy of India twitter account: [@indembassybaku](https://twitter.com/indembassybaku)

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

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