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India-Azerbaijan relations

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Why is in news? Fifth round of India-Azerbaijan Foreign Office Consultations held in New Delhi

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.

This year 2022, India and Azerbaijan mark **30th anniversary** of establishment of their diplomatic relations, started from 1992. India was one of the **first countries to recognize the independence of Azerbaijan in 1991**.

The two countries have successfully diversified cooperation in various areas especially in trade, commerce and energy sectors.

Bilateral trade has grown many-fold and stands at around one billion dollars today.

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.

The two countries have been exploring mutually beneficial cooperation in a number of areas, including agriculture. They explore the collaboration with Azerbaijan in cotton cultivation.

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**.

India and Azerbaijan signed many bilateral agreements like Economic and Technical Cooperation in June 1998, agreement to establish the India-Azerbaijan Intergovernmental Commission (IGC) on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technological Cooperation, 2007, 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, etc.

An Agreement on **visa exemption regime** for diplomatic, official and service passport holders and an MOU for cooperation between FSI and ADA were signed in April 2018.

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

According to the Azerbaijani statistics, the bilateral trade increased to US\$ 1.528 billion during January - August 2022 with an increase of 159.5% and **India became Azerbaijan's fourth largest trade partner** after Italy, Turkey and Russia.

The **primary export** from Azerbaijan to India is **crude oil** and **emerging as an important supplier of crude oil**.

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The important items of direct and indirect imports from India to Azerbaijan are rice, drugs, mobile phones, granite, ceramic tiles, devices and equipment of automatic regulation and control, black tea, etc.

Azerbaijan is an **important player in INSTC route** connecting India with Russia & Europe through Azerbaijan & Iran.

Under the **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme**, the Government of India offers about 30 fully-paid training courses to **Azerbaijani officials** every year.

India also provides scholar slots 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.

The cultural exchanges over ages between Azerbaijan and India have led to close cultural affinity and shared traditions. A **Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP)** was signed between India and Azerbaijan in October 2018. **Yoga** is immensely popular in Azerbaijan.

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.

About **1400 Indians are living in Azerbaijan**. Azerbaijan is also attracting growing numbers of Indian tourists. The Indian community is very active both professionally and socially and has integrated well with the local population.