

## India – Azerbaijan Foreign Office Consultations

The third round of the India-Azerbaijan Foreign Office Consultations were held in Baku on 22-24 September 2011. The Indian delegation was led by Shri Sanjay Singh, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs. The Azerbaijani delegation was led by Mr. Khalaf Khalafov, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Secretary (East) held meetings with H.E. Mr. Shahin Mustafayev, Minister for Economic Development and with Mr. Natig Abbasov, Deputy Minister for Industry and Energy of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

At the Consultations, the two sides discussed in detail bilateral relations with particular focus on strengthening cooperation in the political, trade, economic, and cultural fields and people to people exchanges. Views were also exchanged on regional and international issues of mutual interest. Both sides agreed to strengthen the institutional framework between the two countries, and sign documents, currently under discussion, at the earliest.

Secretary (East) conveyed the warm wishes of the Government of India to the Republic of Azerbaijan on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the restoration of its independence in 2011, and reaffirmed India's support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Both sides expressed their satisfaction at the development of all round relations between the two countries in the last two decades and decided to suitably commemorate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of bilateral relations in 2012.

At the Consultations, Secretary (East) emphasized the fact that as an energy importing and fast developing country, India had an interest in Azerbaijan's oil and gas sector, a fruitful partnership in its upstream and downstream projects, and possible utilization of energy surpluses for production of end products of interest to India, such as fertilizers. The Azerbaijan side welcomed India's interest in these sectors. India is equally committed to a mutually beneficial partnership in Azerbaijan's non-oil sectors particularly in agriculture, information technology, communications, pharmaceuticals, textiles and garments, jewellery, processed food products, infrastructure development and education. Both sides are not only keen to restore the direct communications connectivity of the old by land and water, but also to establish air connectivity and reliable banking, shipping and digital links. Both sides discussed the developments with regard to the International North-South Transit Corridor. Both sides expressed their hope that the forthcoming second session of the Inter-Governmental Commission in Baku will deliberate upon these issues in detail and generate action that facilitates this vision of closer cooperation between the two countries and its peoples in future.

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