

TEAS

M A G A Z I N E



Culture | Public Affairs | Business



Photo: Salamakhina

ALEXANDRA SALAMAKHINA: SYNTHESISING THE ANCIENT AND MODERN

Also in this issue:

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The European Azerbaijan Society (TEAS) is a UK-registered pan-European foundation dedicated to raising awareness of Azerbaijan and fostering closer economic, political and cultural links between that country and the nations of Europe.

As well as promoting the positive aspects of Azerbaijan, TEAS also highlights the plight of the 875,000 refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) within the country. These people are unable to return to their homes and lands because of the illegal occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh and seven surrounding districts by Armenia's armed forces – in defiance of four UN Security Council resolutions.

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The TEAS Facebook page is your chance to learn about the latest news, events, campaigns and other Azerbaijan-related items. Visit and 'like' our page at: <http://bit.ly/TEASFB>.

Win £100 of Amazon vouchers!

Firstly, our congratulations go to Farida Rasulova, Dentons Baku, who is the winner of the competition in the September 2017 edition.

To stand a chance of winning £100 of Amazon vouchers, simply answer the following five questions, the answers to which will be found in this issue of the magazine. In the case of a tie, a draw will be made. Previous winners are ineligible to enter, as are TEAS employees and their families. Please send all entries to editor@teas.eu by 17.00hrs (GMT) on 6 November:

1. At which university was the late Professor Lofti Zadeh an academic when he developed the concept of 'fuzzy logic'?
2. Which Qarabag FK winger scored a goal against Roma?
3. How many tickets will be available to Chelsea supporters who wish to see the Qarabag FK vs. Chelsea match in Baku?
4. What is the title of the inaugural album by Jamal Aliyev?
5. With which legendary US jazz pianist will Shahin Novrasli share a stage in Paris on 14 November?

Upcoming Events For full details of all TEAS events, go to www.teas.eu/upcomingevents

5 November: Isfar Sarabski at the Sunnyside Jazz Festival (Reims, France) 15.30hrs. La Cartonnerie, 84 rue du Dr Lemoine, 51100 Reims. Tickets: <http://bit.ly/cohensarabski2017>. Winner of the Montreux Solo Jazz Piano Prize, Isfar has developed a rich blend of electrifying jazz-mugham that also takes in elements of electronica and funk. Isfar will share a bill with bassist Avishaï Cohen, and TEAS France has supported his participation.

7 November: Conference: Preventing Conflicts Through Intercultural Dialogue – The Example of Azerbaijan 16:00–17:15. UN Office in Geneva, Palais des Nations, Room IX, Geneva, Switzerland. Attendance is free, but registrations must be received before 1 November using the following system:

- Please send an email to paris@teas.eu with your name and organisation.
- Please register on the UN Office in Geneva security system:
Step 1: Create an account in INDICO at the following link: <https://reg.unog.ch/user/register>
Step 2: Register for the event here: <https://reg.unog.ch/event/21607/>

24 November: Private View: Discovering Baku – Hugues Krafft's journey to the Caucasus (Reims, France) 18.30hrs. Musée-Hôtel Le Vergeur, 36 place du Forum, 51100, Reims (Exhibition continues from 25 November–4 February, entry free).

Email: paris@teas.eu This fascinating exhibition – supported by TEAS France – charts the journey and photographs of explorer Hugues Krafft (1853–1935) who visited the Caucasus, and Baku in particular, in the late 19th century.

From the TEAS Director

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev took the opportunity to make some strong statements about Nagorno-Karabakh from the podium at the UN General Assembly in New York. Commenting that Nagorno-Karabakh remains an ancient and historic part of Azerbaijani territory, he unreservedly laid the blame for the occupation at the feet of Armenia. He stressed that Armenia is responsible for ethnic cleansing and war crimes, particularly regarding the Khojaly Massacre, which claimed the lives of 613 civilians and was masterminded by current Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan.

Meanwhile, the Azerbaijani and Armenian Foreign Ministers met on the sidelines of the meeting, hopefully paving the way for a meeting between the two Presidents. One of the issues likely to have been raised is the fate of Azerbaijani hostage Shahbaz Guliyev who, alongside Dilgam Asgarov, was taken hostage

by the illegal Armenian occupying forces after crossing the 'contact line' to tend the graves of his ancestors. He is reported to be in poor health.

The latest progress report on the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) shows that it is now 57 per cent complete. Once it is fully complete, it will provide the final leg in bringing Azerbaijani gas from the Caspian Sea direct to Western Europe.

Following the fall in oil and gas prices, the Azerbaijani government made diversification away from heavy reliance on the energy sector a priority. Latest figures suggest that the tourism sector has risen to the challenge, with 1,818,000 tourists visiting Azerbaijan during the first eight months of 2017.

The sad death has been announced of Professor Lofti Zadeh at the age of 96. He

achieved worldwide renown by developing the concept of 'fuzzy logic'.

There has been widespread praise for the performance of cellist Jamal Aliyev at the Proms, Royal Festival Hall and other venues. This follows his much-acclaimed participation in two Khojaly Commemoration Concerts, organised by TEAS under the auspices of the Justice for Khojaly campaign.

Finally, many congratulations to Qarabag FK, for having made it to the UEFA Champions' League group stages, and for having scored their first goal in this competition against the powerful Roma team. They are the only exiled football team in the world, having been forced from their home ground by the Armenian invasion.

Lionel Zetter
Director, TEAS

UNGA: President Aliyev lambasts Armenia

Opening the 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly in New York, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has issued his most stinging condemnation, as yet, of Armenian policy. During a speech also attended by Mehriban Aliyeva, Azerbaijani First Lady and First Vice-President, and Leyla Aliyeva, Vice-President, Heydar Aliyev Foundation, he commented: “For more than 25 years, Armenia has occupied around 20 per cent of Azerbaijani territory, comprising Nagorno-Karabakh and the seven surrounding regions.

“Nagorno-Karabakh is an ancient and historic part of Azerbaijan. More than one million Azerbaijanis became refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Armenia has conducted a policy of ethnic cleansing against Azerbaijanis in Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh and seven other regions.

“On 26 February 1992, Armenia committed a war crime, killing the 613 peaceful residents of Khojaly, including 106 women and 63 children. The current Armenian President is amongst the war criminals that committed this terrible crime against humanity.

“Many leading international organisations have adopted resolutions demanding the withdrawal of Armenian troops from Azerbaijani territory. In 1993, the UN Security Council passed four resolutions demanding the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Armenian troops from the territory of Azerbaijan.

“Other international organisations, such as the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation (OIC), Non-Aligned Movement, OSCE, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and European Parliament have adopted similar decisions and resolutions. These remain unimplemented by Armenia. For 24 years, Armenia has ignored these UN Security Council resolutions and remains unpunished. In many instances, UN Security Council resolutions have been implemented within days. In our case, 24 years have passed, yet they remain unimplemented. This is a ‘double-standards’ approach that is unacceptable to us. International sanctions must be imposed on Armenia. One of the important UN reforms must be the creation of a mechanism to ensure implementation of UN Security Council resolutions.

“Armenia has done everything to keep the status quo unchanged and has blocked substantive negotiations. The OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair countries – France, Russia and USA – have stated that the status quo is unacceptable on several occasions.

“The question is how this corrupt, failed state, ruled by a despotic, medieval regime, can afford to violate international law for so many years and ignore the resolutions of the UN Security Council and statements from the leading countries of the world? The answer is double-standards. There is no international pressure on the aggressor; no international sanctions imposed on the Armenian dictatorship. This policy must be stopped.

“Such a policy towards the aggressor is not only a demonstration of injustice – it also creates an illusion that the Armenian dictatorship can continue their policy of terror.”

President Ilham Aliyev continued by delineating some of the of the greatest outrages of recent times, including the ‘Four Day War’ in April 2016, which resulted in the death of six Azerbaijani civilians, including one child, the wounding of 26 civilians, and the destruction of hundreds of houses. He outlined that this had led to the liberation of three occupied areas of Agdere, Fuzuli and Jabrayil. He then issued an ultimatum: “The Armenian leadership should not forget this lesson. Otherwise, the result of the next



Armenian provocation will be more painful for them.”

He then made reference to the most recent tragedies caused by this unresolved conflict: “On 4 July 2017, a targeted attack by Armenia on the Alkhanli village in the Fuzuli district using 82 and 120mm mortars and grenade launchers killed two civilians – two-year-old Zahra Guliyeva and her grandmother.” President Ilham Aliyev also recalled the wounding on 7 August of a 13-year-old boy in the Tovuz region, which borders Armenia.

President Ilham Aliyev continued by making a plea: “The international community must stop Armenian fascism and terror. Azerbaijan is committed to peaceful resolution of the conflict, but will simultaneously defend its citizens in line with the UN charter, if Armenian military provocations continue. If necessary, it will punish the aggressor once again, as was the case in April 2016.”

He then outlined the development of his country – despite the unresolved conflict – and explained the endemic nature of Azerbaijani multiculturalism as state policy, in contrast with monoethnic and monoreligious Armenia, focusing on its role in strengthening interreligious dialogue and the UN-supported Baku Process, the main objective of which is to strengthen dialogue, partnership and co-operation between the Muslim world and Europe. President Aliyev also explained that the hosting of such large-scale sports events as the Baku2015 European Games and Islamic Solidarity Games fell within this rubric.

Naturally, the President referred to the impact of the \$40bn (£30.2bn) Southern Gas Corridor, which will provide diversity of energy supply to many EU countries from 2019, but also he explained the work undertaken to transform Azerbaijan into a major transportation hub, due to its pivotal location, including its six international airports, 11,000km of highways, 270 vessel trade fleet, Baku International Seaport Project and its role in the East–West and North–South transportation corridors.

President Aliyev concluded: “The successful development of Azerbaijan once again shows that only when you are free and independent; when the destiny of the country is in the hands of its people; you can achieve success. The greatest achievement of the people of Azerbaijan is that we live in an independent country that conducts an independent policy based on the national interests of its people.”

Lotfi Zadeh, Azerbaijani Father of 'Fuzzy Logic,' passes away at 96

Professor Lotfi Zadeh, the computer scientist and electrical engineer whose 'fuzzy logic' theories rippled across academia and industry, influencing everything from linguistics, economics and medicine to air-conditioners, vacuum cleaners and rice cookers, passed away at his home in Berkeley, California.

Emerging from an academic paper published in 1965 as a professor at the University of California, Berkeley, 'fuzzy logic' was an attempt to close the gap between mathematics and the intuitive way that humans talk, think and interact with the world. For example, it is easy to identify "a very tall man", even if you are not given a specific height. Similarly, a broom handle can be balanced on your finger without calculating how far it can lean in one direction without toppling.

Professor Zadeh envisioned a mathematical framework that could mimic these human traits – therefore dealing with ambiguity and uncertainty. Rather than creating strict boundaries for real world concepts, he made the boundaries "fuzzy." Something was not in or out, for example. It sat somewhere on the continuum between in and out, and at any given moment a set of more complex rules defined inclusion. Professor Rudolf Seising of the University of Jena in Germany, who worked alongside Professor Zadeh in his later years, commented: "It was a bridge between theory and reality."

Professor Timothy Ross of the University of New Mexico commented that the logic itself was not 'fuzzy'. Instead, it was a way of dealing with 'fuzzy sets'; collections of information whose boundaries were vague or imprecise. Over the years, it proved to be an enormously influential concept.

According to the website *Google Scholar*, the 1965 paper by Professor Zadeh, entitled *Fuzzy Sets*, has been cited in over 90,000 scholarly works, and his mathematical concepts have provided practical assistance in the construction of consumer electronics, and analysis of trade stocks, weather forecasting and much more.

Lotfi Asker Zadeh was born on 4 February 1921 in Baku, to a family from the ranks of the intelligentsia. His father was a journalist, and his mother, born in Russia, was a doctor. After the family moved across the Soviet border to Iran, Professor Zadeh graduated with a science degree from the University of Tehran. During World War II he sold goods to the American Army,



The modest genius that was Lotfi Zadeh remained engaged and enthused by science and humanity throughout his long life

earning enough money to continue his education in the US. He received a Master's degree in electrical engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1946 and a Ph.D. from Columbia in 1949.

Working alongside fellow Professor John Ragazzini at Columbia, Professor Zadeh developed a mathematical method entitled z-transformations, which became a standard method of processing digital signals inside computers and other equipment.

He moved to Berkeley in 1959, and Professor Elijah Polak recalled in an interview that his theory of 'fuzzy sets' emerged during their walks across the campus. Professor Zadeh began noticing that when people parked their cars, they would intuitively turn their wheels slightly to the left and then slightly to the right before pulling into a parking space. "But how much is slightly?" he would ask. He then began to use mathematics to define any concept that has ambiguous boundaries.

Professor Zadeh originally envisioned 'fuzzy sets' as simply a framework for harnessing language, but it rapidly expanded into other areas. Professor Ross, author of a textbook on the practical applications of 'fuzzy logic', commented: "They opened up a whole new way of addressing problems where you don't have precise data."

The methodology was also applied to constructing machinery and electronics that gradually move from one state to another, such as car automatic transmissions, which

shift smoothly from first gear to second, or a thermostat, which flows just as smoothly from hot to cold. In that instance, hot and cold need not be precisely defined, as they could exist on a continuum.

In the 1980s, the theories of Professor Zadeh became popular amongst Japanese manufacturers, due to heavy investment from the government, and remain an active part of the mathematics that underpin the modern world.

Professor Zadeh received more than 50 engineering and academic awards, and from 1963–68 he was chairman of the electrical engineering department at Berkeley, helping shift its focus toward computer science; a move that gave rise to one of the leading university computer science programmes in the world.

Professor Zadeh and others saw 'fuzzy logic' as a tool for eventually building true artificial intelligence. Many academics, including some Berkeley colleagues, questioned the effectiveness of this methodology. However, fellow Berkeley Professor Stuart Russell recalled: "He always took criticism as a compliment. It meant that people were considering what he had to say." Professor Zadeh was laid to rest in Baku on 29 September, followed by a ceremony at the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences (ANAS). Visit <http://bit.ly/zadehfuzzy> to hear the late Professor Zadeh speak on artificial intelligence and the nature of 'fuzzy logic' in the wake of receiving the 2009 Benjamin Franklin Medal in Electrical Engineering.

Qarabag FK scores inaugural Azerbaijani goal in the UEFA Champions' League

Playing at the Tofiq Bahramov Stadium in Baku, forward Edin Dzeko sealed a 2–1 win for Roma against Qarabag FK, who became the first Azerbaijani team to score in the UEFA Champions' League. Despite valiant attempts behind an ecstatic and excited home crowd, the historic goal from winger Pedro Henrique was not enough to prevent Qarabag slipping to a narrow defeat.

The Brazilian – on loan from Greek side PAOK – became the first Azerbaijani player to score in the competition outside of the qualifiers, but earlier goals from centre-back Kostas Manolas and Dzeko were enough to give Roma the win.

Qarabag lost 6–0 in their opening Group C match against Chelsea, and feared the worst when Manolas headed in after just seven minutes, before Dzeko netted a second goal before a quarter of an hour had been played.

Roma – under coach Eusebio Di Francesco – who were held by Atletico Madrid on matchday one, eased off at 2–0, allowing Qarabag FK to snatch a lifeline with a goal in the first UEFA Champions' League match to be staged in the country.

Qarabag FK, under talented coach Gurban Gurbanov, were arguably the better side for most of the remaining match, but were unable to test Alisson in the Roma goal, enabling the Italian Serie A side to achieve four points from two games.



Pedro Henrique joins jubilant Qarabag FK fans as they celebrate the historic goal

Roma seemed to let complacency creep in after the Dzeko goal, allowing Qarabag FK to spring dangerous counterattacks on two occasions after losing the ball to the good pressing game of the home side. They failed to heed the warnings and were duly punished at 28 minutes, with Qarabag striker Dino Ndlovu robbing defensive midfielder Maxime Gonalons and feeding Pedro Henrique in the box, who steadied himself before firing past Alisson.

The home side, buoyed by their historic goal, continued to match Roma for intensity in the early part of the second half, although Qarabag goalkeeper Ibrahim Sehic had to make a fine stop to deny Roma right-back Bruno Peres a third goal as he surged into the penalty area on the break. Visit <http://bit.ly/romavsqarabag> to see highlights from the match.

Mammadyarov – Non-Aligned Movement plays crucial role in maintaining international peace

According to Elmar Mammadyarov, Azerbaijani Foreign Minister, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) is playing a crucial role in maintaining international peace and security, addressing a wide range of issues, ranging from regional security to social and economic development.

The observations were made during a ministerial meeting of the NAM on *Promulgation and Implementation of Unilateral Coercive Measures, applied in violation of International Law and the Human Rights of the Peoples subjected to them*, held in New York. He noted the NAM remains a true defender of justice and the rule of law in international relations, addressing matters of global concern.

Mr Mammadyarov pledged: "Taking this into account, Azerbaijan has applied to hold Expo-2025 in Baku. We are very much looking forward to support by the NAM member states for the candidature of Azerbaijan." He expressed the view

that Azerbaijan supports the importance of dialogue to promote the peaceful settlement of disputes and, in this regard, propounds engagement in constructive dialogue between the parties to conflicts.

He continued: "We believe that the key to solving the problem lies in the countries' goodwill and readiness to seek mutually acceptable compromises. By carrying out an independent foreign policy and not being a party to any military alliance, Azerbaijan is making consistent efforts to preserve international norms, principles and to advance democratisation and respect for human rights and social justice on a national and international level.

"As a strong supporter of NAM goals and principles, I am honoured to invite NAM member states to Azerbaijan for the Ministerial Meeting. We propose that this should be held in April 2018. I hope that, with your unanimous support, we will meet again in Baku at Foreign Ministerial level."



Elmar Mammadyarov, Azerbaijani Foreign Minister, demonstrated his appreciation of the supportive role of the Non-Aligned Movement

Nearly 2m tourists visit Azerbaijan in eight months

According to Abulfaz Garayev, Azerbaijani Minister of Culture and Tourism, 1,818,000 tourists visited Azerbaijan during the first eight months of 2017. Speaking on Azerbaijani Tourism Day on 27 September, he explained: "Over 46,000 people work

in the tourism field. Azerbaijan is a stable, safe and hospitable country. Azerbaijani citizens currently spend approximately \$600m (£455m) abroad per annum, but foreigners spend \$700m (£530.8m) in Azerbaijan."

New French–Azerbaijani University building inaugurated

The new building for the French–Azerbaijani University (UFAZ), which operates under the Azerbaijan State Oil and Industry University (ASOIU), has been officially inaugurated. The opening ceremony was attended by Mikayil Jabbarov, Minister of Education; Mustafa Babanli, Rector, ASOIU; Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne, French Secretary-of-State to the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs; Alain Beretz, Director-General for Research and Innovation, French Ministry for Higher Education and Research; H.E. Aurelia Bouchez, French Ambassador to Azerbaijan; Irène Jacobberger, Vice-President, Strasbourg University; and Bernard Meunier, President, French Foundation for Chemistry Research, amongst others.

Mr Jabbarov explained that the day had great significance for the development of Franco-Azerbaijani co-operation. He



The delegation, led by H.E. Aurelia Bouchez, French Ambassador to Azerbaijan, tour the new building

recalled that the establishment of UFAZ was attributable to a bilateral meeting in September 2014 between Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and his former French counterpart François Hollande. He provided some details: “The selection of ASOIU by the Azerbaijani side for the UFAZ project is no coincidence, as Azerbaijan is a country of oil and energy. The participation of our state in international projects is indicative of its development. ASOIU also plays an important role in the training of highly-qualified personnel in

the oil sector. This year, there has been a growth in the number of applications for UFAZ.”

Mr Lemoyne replied: “The greatest wealth of France is an educated nation, whilst Azerbaijan is rich in natural resources. Therefore, we should work together, enabling Azerbaijani and French young people to attain a good educational level in a rapidly-changing world. We would like to express our gratitude to Azerbaijan for choosing to establish UFAZ.”

Chelsea fans to book budget Baku tickets

Following a rather ignominious 6–0 defeat at Stamford Bridge against home team Chelsea FC in the UEFA Champions’ League, Qarabag FK is now set to play against the Premiership Champions at the Olympic Stadium in Baku on 22 November. The team has been unable to play at home for 24 years since the Armenian occupation of its ground in Aghdam during the Armenian–Azerbaijan

conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. Qarabag FK are often referred to as the “team that always plays away from home”, due to the ongoing occupation of Aghdam and the destruction of their Imaret Stadium.

The news for supporters is that Chelsea have subsidised the cost of Thomas Cook Sport packages, reducing the price to £359

per person, plus match ticket. The package includes flights, transfers and a one-night stay in a four-star hotel. Flights would ordinarily cost around £300, with a stopover in Kyiv or Istanbul. Altogether, 1600 tickets will be made available for Chelsea supporters. Visit <http://bit.ly/qarabagvschelsea> to book the package and <http://bit.ly/azvisauk> to obtain an e-visa.

Azerbaijan improves WEF competitiveness ranking

According to the Azerbaijani Centre for Economic Reform Analysis and Communications, the rise in the Azerbaijani position in the World Economic Forum (WEF) competitiveness ranking reflects the international response to the Azerbaijani policy of comprehensive economic reform.

In the latest edition of the *WEF Global Competitiveness Report 2017–18*, the Azerbaijani ranking rose from 37th to 35th position. In a statement, experts added: “Improving the Azerbaijani position in the WEF competitiveness ranking is indicative that Azerbaijan will be able to improve its position in other ratings.” The ranking is the highest achieved by a CIS country. The analysts added: “Even some G20 countries – namely, Russia, Italy, Indonesia,

India, Turkey and South Africa – remained behind Azerbaijan in the competitiveness ranking.” Azerbaijan particularly achieved progress in two categories – namely ‘cluster development’ and ‘competitive advantage’.

Furthermore, the Azerbaijani transportation system was ranked at 43 of 137 countries, thereby leaving Israel, Ireland, Belgium, Austria and Estonia behind. The report expressed the view that the Azerbaijani position had deteriorated in just two categories – ‘macroeconomic environment’ and ‘technological readiness’. Simultaneously, despite external shocks, the country was able to improve its position in the ‘state budget balance’ category, where it ranked 37, and 43 in the ‘state debt’ category.

Azerbaijani tourism to learn from French success

H.E. Rahman Mustafayev, Azerbaijani Ambassador to France, has exchanged experience with Richard Soubielle, Vice-President, Entreprises de Voyage in Paris, during discussions on bilateral co-operation on tourism.

Initially, Mr Mustafayev emphasised the importance of tourism in promoting political, economic and cultural relations. Stressing that Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev attaches special importance to the development of tourism, he outlined the infrastructure that has been created in Baku and in the Azerbaijani regions. Ambassador Mustafayev also noted that co-operation in the

sector would enhance co-operation and collaboration between the two countries.

Mr Soubielle also recalled the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between Entreprises de Voyage and the Azerbaijani Ministry of Culture and Tourism, aimed at promoting Azerbaijan in France. Speaking to AzerTac, he commented: “In the near future we will organise a visit by media representatives to Azerbaijan. We also plan to organise a visit of tourism experts who will develop a programme that will enable French tourists to become better-acquainted with Baku.”

Azerbaijani–NATO relations develop

Colonel-General Zakir Hasanov, Azerbaijani Defence Minister met a delegation led by James Appathurai, the NATO Secretary-General's Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia. Noting that Azerbaijan is a NATO partner, the Minister stressed that the NATO position on security in the South Caucasus serves to strengthen Euro-Atlantic security, and is an important element of peace and stability in the region. He also acknowledged the political support provided by NATO for the maintenance of Azerbaijani territorial integrity.

Touching on the ongoing Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, the Minister propounded the view that Armenian military aggression is a serious threat to regional security. In response, Mr Appathurai reiterated his appreciation of the NATO–Azerbaijani relationship, particularly the contribution made by Azerbaijani peacekeepers to international security in the framework of operations conducted in Afghanistan and the further development of co-operation and active participation of Azerbaijani servicemen in various NATO programmes.



The NATO delegation, led by James Appathurai, Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia, NATO Secretary-General, discussed the future of Azerbaijani–NATO relations with a delegation led by Colonel-General Zakir Hasanov, Azerbaijani Defence Minister

Azerbaijani importance for the American Jewish Lobby

Writing on the eve of Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year), which is celebrated on 22 September, Ayre Gut, an expert on Azerbaijani– and Turkish–Israeli matters has written in the *Jerusalem Post* about the ongoing strength of Azerbaijani–Israeli relations. Initially he quotes a message from Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev that reads: “Azerbaijan, located at the junction of civilisations, is today one of the unique places where multicultural traditions are preserved and there is an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust between individual religions and cultures.

“Established and living in Azerbaijan over many centuries, the Jewish community occupies a specific place in our society. It is significant that our Jewish citizens play an essential role in all spheres of the country's life, demonstrating an active civil position in the further strengthening of our state independence, and bringing to the world community the truth about Azerbaijan.

“Rosh Hashanah is a holiday that embodies renewal, spiritual purity and solidarity. May this special day for the Jewish people bring each of you a good mood, happiness and joy to your families.”

Mr Gut then continues by explaining that, during his trip to New York, President Ilham Aliyev met numerous representatives of American Jewish organisations. He commented that the American Jewish organisations attach great importance to co-operation with Azerbaijan and hailed the excellent bilateral relations that exist between Azerbaijan and the US and Israel.

The leaders of the American Jewish Organisations thanked President Ilham Aliyev for the conditions created that enable the Jewish community to live in an atmosphere of mutual understanding and peace, as is the case with other communities in Azerbaijan. They lauded the stability and security in Azerbaijan, and praised the country's commitment to a policy of multiculturalism and tolerance.

The article then goes on to quote Yuri Kanner, Vice-President, World Jewish Congress and President, Russian Jewish Congress, who commented: “This was a very open and substantial discussion on all key issues of concern to President Ilham Aliyev and Ronald Lauder, President, World Jewish Congress.

“It is important to understand the processes that happen here today, and to note that they constitute an example for other Muslim-majority countries. The success of this model of multiculturalism has been noted by all participants.”

The article then goes on to outline the realities of Krasnaya Sloboda (Guba) in northern Azerbaijan, said to be the only all-Jewish town outside of Israel, and the shared history of Jewish and Muslim Azerbaijanis, including the tragic events of 1918–19 when the Armenian Revolutionary Federation massacred thousands of Azerbaijanis, regardless of religion. It then continues by emphasising the nature of Azerbaijani multiculturalism and tolerance, in stark contrast with neighbouring monoethnic Armenia. The article comments on the strong bilateral trade relations between the countries in a year that celebrates the 25th anniversary of Azerbaijani–Israeli bilateral relations.

It also makes reference to Azerbaijani intelligence officer Sadygashvili (Hamza Djumshudoglu Sadigov), who played an essential role in capturing General Johann von Roddenburg, a particularly sadistic perpetrator of crimes against humanity during the Holocaust, and highlights the involvement of Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan and former Armenian Defence Minister Seyran Ohanyan in the Khojaly Massacre. This was the worst single atrocity of the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict, which claimed the lives of 613 civilians in 1992.

The article concludes: “The State of Israel supports the just position of Azerbaijan and calls for the settlement of the Armenian–Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict within the framework of international law and the principle of the territorial integrity of states. In this complex geopolitical situation, support of Azerbaijan's fair position by such an important strategic partner and strong geopolitical actor in the Middle-East as the State of Israel is very necessary and important for the Republic of Azerbaijan... Common values and a shared history permeate the modern relationship. Both countries are enriched by the human connections between them and a determination to live in diverse and religiously tolerant societies.” Go to <http://bit.ly/jerusalempostgut> to read the full article.



Three of the unique ready-to-wear looks from the Salamakhina A/W collection, unveiled during Paris Fashion Week (Photos: Salamakhina)

Salamakhina – looking back and forward

Alexandra Salamakhina ranks amongst the most distinctive young designers to emerge from the Azerbaijan fashion milieu. Located in Baku, she takes her inspiration from the nature, carpet motifs, national dress and ornaments of her homeland. Alexandra recently unveiled her inaugural Spring/Summer 2018 collection during Paris Fashion Week at the 18th century Hôtel d'Evreux in the iconic Place Vendôme, and Neil Watson caught up with her upon her return to Baku:

You have just exhibited at Paris Fashion Week for the first time. Which fashions did you exhibit and how did attendees and the media receive them?

The current collection has been produced on a 'ready-to-wear' basis. Each item can be purchased directly from the runway and combined with any contemporary fashion to create a unique look with an overriding national ethos. Before and immediately after the show, several local media representatives published or requested information about the brand and event itself. This is the most important aspect of the post-show period, as feedback and interest provide a lot of scope for brand development.

Where did you study fashion design?

I wish I were able to tell a beautiful story about having dreamed of becoming a fashion designer since childhood and how I studied in the best fashion design schools. However, the only diploma I have achieved, to date, is an MSc in Environmental Management. I have now worked in this sector for 15 years. All I learned about design and fashion is taken from books, following guidelines and applying experience. My fashion design career started as a hobby

five years ago, and I initially designed silk scarves as a small colourful escape from my daily routine. I love symmetrical designs and repeated patterns, and scarves seemed the ideal format for my experiments.

What led you to focus initially on scarves/wraps and scarf rings?

Over time, I decided to print my designs in new formats and to develop accessories for scarves. That year, we made a small-scale project alongside Georgian jewellers to create limited-edition enamelled rings that would suit the major scarf manufacturers (fitting our 110×100cm models). Each design took into account the complementary scarf colour schemes.

Are you personally responsible for all the designs? Through which stages must a design pass from initial concept to production?

Regardless of the final use of each element, hand sketches have been realised in various colours. Each detail is clearly drawn, and then the same elements are repeated in a vector graphic version. For example, the *Gozelim (My Beauty)* pattern was developed over several weeks, each element being saved in various colour combinations.

Before the scarf or fabric pattern can be printed on the textile, we check the test prints, verify the colours and ensure accuracy of print registration. It is important for every element to be accurately realised to tight tolerances. An exception is the material that is derived from the ornaments found on ceramics and décor from

the Azerbaijani region of Lahic. In this instance, the original items are renowned for their uniqueness, and thus the fabric realised must reflect this.

Which materials/dyes are used and where does production take place?

An objective is to create a typically local product under the brand *Made in Azerbaijan*, although I have had to use foreign textile manufacturers, to date, located in such countries as China, Russia and the UK. Regrettably, the requisite quality of silk and cotton textiles is currently unavailable in Azerbaijan. However, we use Azerbaijani artisans to manufacturer belts, bags and other accessories.

How do you decide on which ornaments from Azerbaijani art and culture to use on your scarves/wraps?

Each specific element has its own significance. For example, one design entitled *Khemse* features an element from the façade of the National Museum of Azerbaijani History. Its name is taken from one of the famous poems penned by Nizami Ganjavi (1149–1209). Fabrics have been realised in the shades of the main colours used in decoration of that building.

If I find a theme or ornament interesting and inspiring, I will research every aspect before using it on a design or accessory. For example, one of the most popular scarf designs is *Garagashli (black-browed)*, dedicated to the famous Guba carpet. Its background colour is dark and replete with vibrant combinations. Each design has its own mood and message that we send to our customers.

Your designs are very precisely detailed, with clearly delineated lines for the symbols and designs. What made you decide on this type of design?

I am in love with the decorative arts, and many artisanal handicrafts, whether on glass or wood, incorporate detailed decorative elements. This style is noteworthy for the accurate definition of each line, highlighting its key symbols and following the symmetry of figure placement. The reflection of this style on our fabrics makes our brand recognisable. Since we began to produce clothing, it has been a challenge to produce fabrics with the requisite level of print quality, but the result has justified every effort undertaken.

Where are your current customers based?

Our silk scarves and wraps can be shipped over the world to all destinations and, in addition to our online shop, we have a retailer in Canada. For clothes and outerwear we generally work with local boutiques, as fitting is an essential when purchasing certain items.

Do you see yourself expanding beyond scarves/wraps, or utilising symbols/designs from beyond Azerbaijan?

Any theme can be inspiring if it raises emotions in my heart. I need to feel and assess each project from more than solely a commercial perspective. When undertaking my designs, I look at both Azerbaijani art and art from across the South Caucasus, as several generations of Azerbaijanis have lived in this area. I intend to play my role in maintaining and evolving the art and traditions of my homeland in all my works and projects, as this is in my genetic memory. In my view, that which is created without soul will never bring the requisite level of emotional and financial success. I intend to follow my dreams, but will always keep my feet planted firmly on the ground.

Go to www.clabhandicrafts.com for more information on the Salamakhina brand.



Alexandra Salamakhina has harnessed ornaments and motifs from across Azerbaijan for her range



A vibrant scarf featuring a variant on Guba carpet designs



Pendants inspired by the Lahic region, renowned for its artisanal metalcraft



This silk print dress in the *Gozelim (My Beauty)* range combines ancient prints with contemporary tailoring

Jamal Aliyev – great music in varied contexts

This year, Azerbaijani cellist Jamal Aliyev has been making great waves with his debut at the BBC Promenade Concerts, accompanied by the BBC Concert Orchestra under Keith Lockhart celebrating the works of acclaimed film composer John Williams, where he performed *Syuri's Theme* from the soundtrack of the film *Memoirs of a Geisha*. This led critic Ivan Hewitt to write in the *Daily Telegraph*: "The tender cello solo from Jamal Aliyev in *Memoirs of a Geisha* is in my ear still."

He also won the Arts Club – Sir Karl Jenkins Music Award and was selected for representation by the Young Classical Artists' Trust (YCAT). *Russian Masters*, his debut album with pianist Anna Fedorova, was also recently released to critical acclaim by Champs Hill records.

Born in Baku in 1993, Jamal studied at the Yehudi Menuhin School and at the Royal College of Music with Thomas Carroll, where he embarks on his Master's this autumn. Recently, he has been particularly busy in London. Initially, on 21 September, he gave a concert at the intimate private venue of Page's Yard House in Chiswick, where he performed alongside Kazakh violinist Assya Nurzhigitovna and Chinese pianist YaoYing Wang. Despite being billed as Jamal Aliyev and Friends, Jamal generously gave space for the two other performers to demonstrate the depth of their dexterity. Jamal's contribution to the programme was most fascinating, predominantly comprising works normally heard on the violin, including Saint-Saens' lyrical *The Swan*; Massenet's emotional and meditative *Meditation* from the opera *Thais*; Monti's exhilarating *Czardas*, inspired by Gypsy music; and the programme concluded with all three musicians collaborating on the second movement of Mendelssohn's *Piano Trio No.1 in D Minor*, a romantic work that prompted Schumann to give the composer the sobriquet of: "The Mozart of the 19th century; the most illuminating of musicians."



Jamal Aliyev acknowledges heartfelt applause following an intimate concert amidst the evocative late-Victorian surroundings of the 1901 Arts Club (Photo: Dr Ali Atalar)

Thereafter on 29 September, he moved to the Royal Festival Hall to participate in a performance of the mass *The Armed Man* by contemporary Welsh composer Sir Karl Jenkins, where he played the emotional *Benedictus* with the Philharmonia Orchestra under the baton of the composer. Jamal then returned to the artistic hub of London's South Bank for a performance in the historic surroundings of the 1901 Arts Club. Performing alongside his regular collaborator pianist Maria Tarasewicz, this concert demonstrated the full gamut of his ability, including Bach's *Solo Cello Suite No.3 in C Major*, often performed and recorded by his late compatriot Mstislav Rostropovich; Tchaikovsky's challenging *Rococo Variations*; Rachmaninov's sublime *Vocalise*; and contemporary Russian composer Rodion Shchedrin's Latin-styled work *In the Style of Albeniz*, originally written for piano, which the composer – who frequently collaborated with Rostropovich – rearranged for cello in 1995. Visit www.jamalaliyev.com for more information.

Sarabski in Reims

Isfar Sarabski is a doyen of Azerbaijani piano jazz. Born with an illustrious musical heritage, this precocious graduate from the Baku Music Academy won the Solo Jazz Piano prize at the prestigious Montreux Jazz Festival in 2009. Now only aged 28, he has developed a rich blend of electrifying jazz-mugham that also takes in elements of electronica and funk, and he has most recently toured with Tunisian singer and oud player Dhafer Youssef.

He is now set to grace the stage of the annual Sunnyside Jazz Festival in Reims – 129km from Paris – on 5 November, where he will share a bill with bassist Avishaï Cohen amidst the quasi-industrial setting of La Cartonnerie. Go to <http://bit.ly/cohensarabski2017> to book tickets.



Isfar Sarabski will continue his quest of harmonic exploration in Reims

Blissful harmonies – Mugham Souls unite

The release of the extraordinary album *Mugham Souls* on the Italian label Felmay charts the exceptional encounter of two



master vocalists, albeit from seemingly two disparate musical backgrounds – French jazz countertenor Pierre de Trégomain, who has a background in ethnojazz, including Sufism, and Azerbaijani mugham singer Gochag Askarov, a Karabakh native, whose pure voice is amongst the most mellifluous of contemporary classical khanendes. After hearing Gochag's album *Mugham: Traditional Music of Azerbaijan*, also on Felmay, Pierre decided to study mugham vocal technique with him in Baku.

Under the guidance of Azerbaijani musicologist Dr Sanubar Baghirova, the vocalists pooled their collective inspiration

and technique to develop the *Mugham Souls* jazz-mugham concept, which takes a range of mughams and folksongs as its point of departure, including *Let Me Be Voice* (based on *Bayati Kürd*), *Sari Gelin*, and *Shelter* (based on *Bayati Shiraz*). The supporting musicians rank amongst the finest in Azerbaijan, including Elnur Mikayilov (kamancha), Kamran Karimov (naghara) and Vasif Huseynzade (piano).

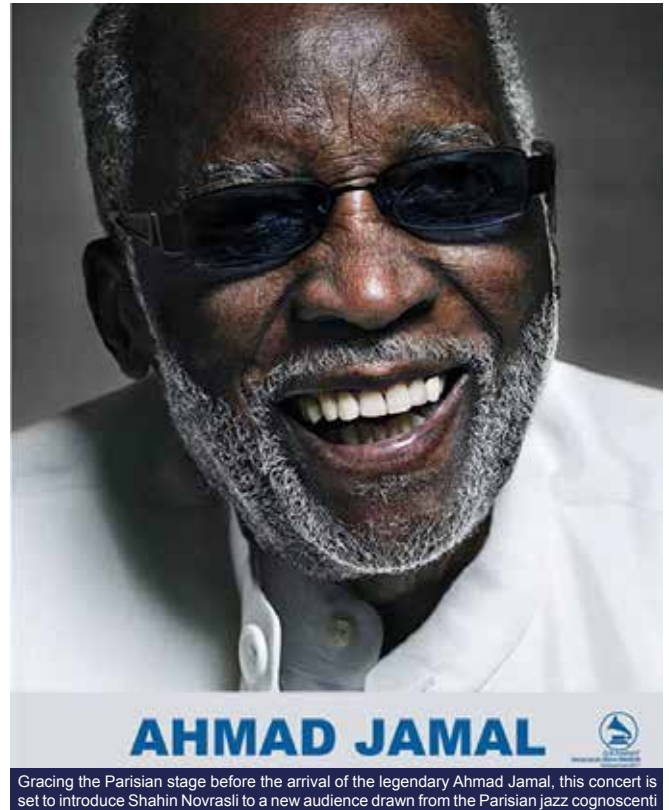
To order *Mugham Souls*, go to <http://bit.ly/mughamsouls> and visit bit.ly/gochagandpierre to see them perform *Let Me Be Voice* at the International Mugham Centre in Baku.

Shahin Novrasli – standing on a giant’s shoulders

Now aged 87, Ahmad Jamal is the elder statesman of modern jazz piano. Influenced by the great Erroll Garner, he is one of the most successful small group leaders of all time, having developed a richly figurative style that owes as much to Bach as to Art Tatum. He achieved particular popularity in the jazz hub that is Paris, and has performed at all the major Parisian concert halls, including L’Olympia and the Salle Pleyel, which led him to make the French capital his home.

His ears remain resolutely open to other pianists of all styles, and that is how he became aware of Azerbaijani pianist Shahin Novrasli. Speaking recently in Paris, Mr Jamal commented: “Shahin is a spectacular pianist”, having recently made Shahin his protégé, and producing his latest album *Emanation*, which was also recorded in the City of Lights.

Now, the two piano maestros are set to share a stage at the 3700-seater Palais des congrès de Paris, located in the 17th arrondissement, on 14 November. Shahin will open the first half, playing a rich mélange of standards, his own compositions and variations on Azerbaijani pieces. Then Ahmad Jamal will take the stage alongside Abd al-Malik, Franco-Congolese rapper, and Franco-Beninese singer-songwriter Mina Agossi, former protégé of Archie Shepp. He will perform pieces from his new album *Marseille*, which evokes life in this French city, but also looks at the African ancestry of jazz and the impact of colonisation. Visit <http://bit.ly/emanationtrailer> to see a trailer for *Emanation*, and go to <http://bit.ly/jamalnovrasli2017> to book tickets for the concert at the Palais des congrès.



Haute Couture hits the Cultural Centre

To mark the day of the Paris-based Fashion Glam Centre (FGC), within Paris Fashion Week, Myriam Larrière, President, FGC, organised a presentation of the latest A/W collection of Hajar Gala, founder of De Challie Haute Couture, an Azerbaijani designer located in Canberra, Australia. The collection was unveiled in the presence of Jean-François Mancel, President, l’Association des Amis de l’Azerbaïdjan (AAA) and former French Deputy; and Miravi Fataliyeva, Secretary-General, AAA. The runway took place at the Azerbaijani Cultural Centre in Paris, in the shadow of the iconic Eiffel Tower.

Having studied at the International Fashion Academy (IFA), Hajar established her fashion house in 1993, and has since gained a reputation as one of the primary exponents of Haute Couture in Australia. Hajar particularly concentrates on bridal and evening wear, taking great inspiration from the Golden 20s ‘Jazz Age’ flapper era through to the sophisticated glamour of 1950s Hollywood, combined with contemporary styling, derived from Azerbaijani styles and ornaments. In addition to the presentation in Paris, her designs have been showcased across the world, in each case being accompanied by Azerbaijani classical music to create a suitable ambience. Visit www.dechallie.com.au to find out more.



One of the extraordinary and beautiful creations from the De Challie Haute Couture house (Photo: Vusala Aliyeva)

Bakutel on the horizon

Bakutel 2017 – the 23rd Azerbaijani International Telecommunications and Information Technologies Exhibition and Conference – will take place from 5–8 December in Baku, where it will mark the beginning of High Technologies Week. The exhibition will provide a unique platform where specialists and professionals from various ICT fields can meet. Furthermore, the exhibition serves as an invaluable venue for ordinary users to increase their knowledge and understanding of the most effective tools for data exchange and processing.

The conference and exhibition is supported by the Azerbaijani Ministry of Transport, Communications and High Technologies;

the Azerbaijani Fund for the Promotion of Export and Investment (AZPROMO); and the Azerbaijani National Confederation of Entrepreneurs (AEC). The organiser is Caspian Event Organisers (CEO).

Baku 2017 will bring together over 200 companies from 20 countries, including the predominant Azerbaijani ICT companies, mobile operators, telecommunications operators, internet providers, systems integrators, and media broadcasting companies. The exhibition will present the next generation of IT solutions, including national broadband internet and 4G–5G mobile technologies, together with fibre-optic and cloud computing services.



Bakutel 2017 will host the national stands of several countries, and feature a dynamic programme of business events, conferences and meetings. The exhibition will also facilitate the organisation of business-to-business meetings between exhibitors and professional visitors. Visit www.bakutel.az for more information and to register for an invitation ticket.

STAR set to be the only new refinery in the CEE for a decade

The STAR oil refinery, under construction by the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijani Republic (SOCAR) on the Aliaga Peninsula in Turkey, is anticipated to be the only new refinery in the Central and Eastern European (CEE) region over the next decade, according to the outlook for CEE oil, gas and fuel released by BMI Research (a unit of the Fitch Group). According to the analysts, the focus will be on modernisation of existing facilities across the rest of Eastern Europe, Russia and the Caspian. The report predicted: “This will largely involve upgrading to

Euro-V standard fuels in the Caspian countries, with Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan increasing production capacity for cleaner fuels.”

The total cost of the STAR oil refinery project exceeds \$5bn (£3.8bn), and it is predicted that the plant will be launched in 2018 with an annual capacity of 10m tonnes. The plant will be used to refine Azeri Light, Kirkuk and Urals oil. Production will include 1.7m tonnes of naphtha and 6m tonnes of ultra-low sulphur content diesel per annum.



The STAR oil refinery nears completion

Topaz bags TOTAL contract in Azerbaijan

UAE-based offshore vessel provider Topaz Energy and Marine has won a contract in Azerbaijan to supply one of its anchor handlers to TOTAL. Topaz will supply its Topaz Triumph vessel to TOTAL E&P Absheron (TEPAb), which is operating on behalf of the Joint Operating Company for Absheron Project (JOCAP), a 50:50 venture between SOCAR and TOTAL. The contract with TEPAb is expected to last over a year, and will service one workover and one development well on the Absheron offshore field.

IBA privatisation discussed with EBRD

Safar Sharifov, Azerbaijani Finance Minister, has revealed the readiness of Azerbaijan to discuss participation by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) in the privatisation of the International Bank of Azerbaijan (IBA) in early 2018. During a visit to Baku, Suma Chakrabarti, President, EBRD, commented that his organisation was prepared to assist with implementing the changes to the banking sector. The IBA is currently undertaking a \$3.3bn (£2.5bn) debt restructuring programme.

TAP – 57 per cent complete

Construction of the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) – a main artery of the EU-backed Southern Gas Corridor that will initially bring 16bn m³ (bcm) of Azerbaijani Caspian gas from the Shah Deniz II field to Europe – is 57 per cent complete, according to SOCAR. The estimate was made after representatives of AzTAP GmbH, controlled and operated by SOCAR Midstream Operations, participated in a meeting of the TAP Board of Directors.

According to a statement: “They also visited Greek Western Macedonia, where pipeline construction is underway, going on to review the construction and welding process in the Pella region.” The TAP project is currently 52.8 per cent complete in Greece, whilst 57 per cent has been implemented altogether. TAP is 878km long and connects to the Trans-Anatolian Pipeline (TANAP) on the Turkish–Greek border, passing through Greece, Albania and the Adriatic Sea.

Georgian-Azerbaijani co-operation energised

Both Georgia and Azerbaijan are striving to establish close private sector contacts to increase the level of bilateral investment and to support the joint development of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). This has resulted in the establishment of Caspian Energy Georgia, the launch event being attended by Giorgi Kvirikashvili, Georgian Prime Minister.

Mr Kvirikashvili congratulated all those involved in the establishment of the new organisation, and expressed hope that Caspian Energy Georgia would contribute towards the further extension of Georgian–Azerbaijani trade-economic relations.

Caspian Energy Georgia will represent the interests of the Caspian European Club, Caspian American Club and Caspian Energy International Media Group in Georgia. The company is being created to satisfy the requirements of Georgian, Azerbaijani, Turkish and Kazakh companies who wish to increase their activities in Georgia.

Caspian Energy Georgia will organise business forums, CEO lunches, training seminars, roundtables and the annual Caspian Energy Forum in Tbilisi and the Black Sea resort town of Batumi.

Sangachal Terminal expansion nears completion

According to SOCAR, work to expand the BP-operated Sangachal Oil and Gas Terminal within the Shah Deniz II project is now almost complete. Located 55km south of Baku, the terminal plays a vital role in the Azerbaijani oil and gas industry.

According to SOCAR, officials from SOCAR Midstream Operations visited the terminal on 21 September. They concluded: "Construction and installation work to expand the Sangachal Terminal is continuing at a rapid pace. As of September 2017, this work is 99.8 per cent complete. Currently, work on all the main and auxiliary technological sites, except for the tank farm, has been completed and the project is on schedule."

The terminal receives, processes, stores and exports crude oil and gas produced from all BP assets in the Caspian basin. It incorporates oil and gas processing facilities, the initial pumping station for the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline, the South Caucasus Gas Pipeline (SCP) compressor and other functionalities.

The daily capacity of the processing systems is currently 1.2m barrels of oil and about 29.5 million m³ of gas (mcm), whilst its overall processing and export capacity for gas, including that from the Azeri-Chirag-Guneshli (ACG) field, is about 49.3mcm per day.

EU–Azerbaijani interaction deepens

Shahin Mustafayev, Azerbaijani Economy Minister, has acknowledged that the EU, to date, has allocated technical assistance



Elmar Mammadyarov, Azerbaijani Foreign Minister, exchanges dialogue with Kestutis Jankauskas, Head of the EU Delegation to Azerbaijan in Baku

to Azerbaijan worth €522m (£465.6m). He made the comments during a meeting with Kestutis Jankauskas, the newly-appointed Head of the EU Delegation to Azerbaijan.

Mr Mustafayev stated: "The EU share in Azerbaijani trade turnover amounted to 35 per cent. Over the past decade, the EU share of the total volume of investments in

fixed capital reached 46 per cent, and the volume of direct investments in the non-oil sector came to 35 per cent. Altogether, more than 1300 companies from EU countries operate in Azerbaijan."

He explained that Azerbaijani–EU economic relations are successfully developing, and went on to pledge that Azerbaijan wishes to further expand its co-operation in the non-oil sector, which is one of the priority directions for the Azerbaijani government.

Mr Mustafayev went on to hail the strength of co-operation in both the transportation and energy fields, particularly emphasising the significance of the Southern Gas Corridor and the potential use of Azerbaijani transit infrastructure.

Mr Jankauskas replied by stating that active work is currently underway on a strategic partnership agreement between

the EU and Azerbaijan. Underlining the strength of effective co-operation in the energy sector, he outlined the wide export opportunities for Azerbaijan.

The Azerbaijani State Customs Committee revealed that Azerbaijani–EU trade turnover reached \$4.3bn (£3.3bn) during January–August 2017, of which exports to EU countries accounted for \$3.2bn (£2.4bn).

On 14 November 2016, the European Council issued a mandate to the European Commission and EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to negotiate a comprehensive agreement with Azerbaijan on behalf of the EU and its member states. This will replace the partnership and co-operation agreement signed in 1996 and factor in the common goals and challenges now facing the EU and Azerbaijan.

TAP to launch 131 more projects

Luca Schieppati, Managing Director, Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) Consortium, has revealed that his organisation will roll out 131 additional projects worth approximately €23m (£20.6m) in the near future. He outlined some of the myriad benefits, commenting: "The project will directly contribute to the gross domestic products (GDP) of Greece, Albania and Italy via taxation. Furthermore, TAP will promote economic development and both direct and indirect job creation along the pipeline route, both during construction and in operation.

"Currently, nearly 6000 people work for the project in these three countries, as part of the TAP network of key contractors. There are many 'spill-over' effects for adjacent businesses, including accommodation, transport and catering, via eligible suppliers. Furthermore, TAP is supporting local communities with strategic



The BP-operated Sangachal Terminal plays a pivotal role in oil and gas processing – still the lifeblood of the Azerbaijani economy (Photo: BP)

The expansion project will enable it to process an additional 16bn m³ per annum (bcma), almost tripling overall gas processing capacity and further increasing the importance of the terminal to the regional oil and gas industry.

Shah Deniz II is a giant project that will add a further 16bcma of gas production to the approximately 9bcma produced by Shah Deniz I. The gas will be exported to Turkey and the EU via the Southern Gas Corridor, which comprises an extension to the South Caucasus Pipeline (SCP) and the construction of the Trans-Anatolian Pipeline (TANAP) and Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP). The first Shah Deniz II gas is expected in 2018. Reserves at the Shah Deniz field are estimated at 1.2tn m³ (tcm) of gas and 240m tonnes of condensate.

projects as part of its social and environmental investment (SEI) programme. In total, we will invest over €55m (£493m) in the communities along our route."

He acknowledged that, in Northern Greece, TAP has invested €9m (£8.1m) to enhance and upgrade the 92-strong fleet of utility vehicles. Mr Schieppati expanded: "In Albania, we rehabilitated a double lane bridge in the city of Corovoda, which will improve transport infrastructure as well as access to the main hospital in the city. In Italy, as part of the second edition of TAP Start, we are offering small grants totalling €400,000 (£358,909) for projects in the sectors of tourism, sport, environment and social issues. Altogether, 131 additional projects with a total value of approximately €23m (£20.6m) are due to be rolled out in the near future."

Foreign Ministers' meeting welcomed by UN Secretary-General



Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, flanked by Elmar Mammadyarov, Azerbaijani Foreign Minister and Novruz Mammadov, Deputy Head, Azerbaijani Presidential Administration, meets a UN delegation led by Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary-General in Baku.

Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary-General, has welcomed the recent meetings in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly between the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair representatives, Elmar Mammadyarov, Azerbaijani Foreign Minister, Edward Nalbandian, his Armenian counterpart, and Ambassador Andrzej Kasprzyk, Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office. According to the statement, the Secretary-General wholeheartedly supports the work of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs aimed at de-escalating tensions and reinvigorating the negotiation process regarding the unresolved Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.

It continued: “The Secretary-General hopes that the planned summit meeting at the Presidential level will contribute towards enhancing confidence and fostering the necessary political will amongst the parties to find peaceful compromise solutions to the key outstanding issues.”

The meetings saw the sides exchange views on the settlement of the conflict. Mr Mammadyarov commented that Azerbaijan supports the proposals outlined by the Co-Chairs regarding continuity of the substantial negotiations over conflict settlement. He also reiterated that Azerbaijan always stands ready to undertake the necessary negotiations to achieve swift conflict resolution.

Turkish PM: Armenian killing of an Azerbaijani toddler is a crime against humanity

Binali Yildirim, Turkish Prime Minister, has issued his strongest condemnation yet of Armenian policy during the Azerbaijani–Armenian conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. Speaking during a meeting with H.E. Faig Bagirov, the outgoing Azerbaijani Ambassador to Turkey, he stated: “The killing of two-year-old Zahra Guliyeva and her grandmother, due to the shelling of the Alkhanli village in the Fuzuli district of Azerbaijan on 4 July, is a crime against humanity.”

Mr Yildirim reiterated that Turkey always stands by Azerbaijan with regard to the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, particularly regarding the return of the refugees and IDPs to their homelands. He condemned Armenian provocations at the Azerbaijani border.

The killings were in direct contravention of the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and other international agreements, which defend the rights of civil society and forbid the targeting of civilians.

Meanwhile, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev met Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary-General, in New York on 20 September. The UN Secretary-General commented: “Azerbaijan is our old friend. Azerbaijan conducts excellent, useful work and undertakes initiatives and measures.” He expressed concern over the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh and hope that the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs would do everything possible to resolve the conflict.

In reply, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev made reference to the hosting in Baku of the Global Forums of the UN Alliance of Civilisations, Intercultural Dialogue, and an event organised in the framework of co-operation with the Council of Europe, pledging to continue this relationship.

President Ilham Aliyev stressed that the Armenian side impacts negotiations regarding settlement of the conflict and is trying to delay its resolution. He reiterated: “We want our citizens to return to their homes and live peacefully there.”

President Ilham Aliyev also spoke about restoration of the village of Jojug Marjanli in the Jabrayil district, which was liberated from occupation in April 2016. He noted that the village now has all necessary infrastructure. He went on to indicate that the UN should take all this into consideration and send a message to the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs that resolution is imperative.

Karabakh conflict settlement discussed in PACE

According to the *Report* news agency, the PACE Subcommittee on Conflicts between Council of Europe Member States has discussed the settlement of protracted conflicts. The meeting, held in the Greek Parliament in Athens, included a discussion on the settlement of the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.

During the session, Stefan Schennach, PACE Subcommittee Chairman, met three OSCE representatives on conflicts – Klaus Keller, Member of the German Foreign Ministry, focusing on the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict; Martin Sajdik, OSCE Special Representative to Ukraine; and Dietrich Heim, OSCE Special Representative for the Transnistrian settlement process.

In March, Mr Schennach, PACE Deputy, was elected as Chairman of the new PACE Subcommittee on Conflicts, in addition to being Co-Rapporteur for the PACE Monitoring Committee. He previously stated that the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict would become one of three priority issues to be addressed by the new Subcommittee.

Ongoing plight of hostages in the spotlight

A meeting of the Azerbaijani Committee for Protection of the Rights of Dilgam Asgarov and Shahbaz Guliyev, who are held hostage by Armenia, took place in Baku. The participation in the OSCE summit conference in Warsaw by Kurdoglu Asgarov, son of Dilgam Asgarov, was discussed at the meeting. Participants were provided with detailed information about the detention conditions of the hostages.

He explained: “We brandished father’s Russian passport, and addressed Russian MPs there, asking why no steps had been taken regarding Dilgam Asgarov, who is a citizen of Russia. At the summit, we provided information about the conditions of detention of Dilgam Asgarov and Shahbaz Guliyev, their illegal imprisonment by the Armenians, and attracted the attention of the summit participants to this issue.

“We managed to interest various Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), who we separately met and provided with detailed information. The MEPs promised to keep the issue in the spotlight.” He concluded by explaining that a protest rally in support of the hostages was organised outside the Armenian Embassy in Warsaw on 22 September.

Sahib Asgarov, brother of Dilgam, revealed that they had received no information on the hostages since March 2017. He commented: “We are only told that Dilgam doesn’t want to write a letter or undertake a video talk.”

In July 2014, Mr Asgarov, a Russian citizen (56), and Mr Guliyev, an Azerbaijani citizen, (48) were taken hostage by occupying Armenian forces in Kalbajar when they were visiting family graves. Another 37-year-old Azerbaijani citizen, Hasan Hasanov, was killed. On 19 December 2014, an illegal court in Nagorno-

Karabakh sentenced Mr Asgarov and Mr Guliyev to life and 22 years, respectively.

On 2 October 2017, Mr Guliyev began to experience serious health problems and was hospitalised in Yerevan. One of his relatives informed the *Report* news agency: “We were shown video footage of Shahbaz, where he spoke of gallbladder surgery. Following this, he experienced serious health problems, and was hospitalised for a month. Shahbaz has claimed that he has problems with his digestive system and is currently unable to eat. The food is not being normally absorbed by his body.”

The Azerbaijani State Committee on Affairs of Refugees and IDPs, State Commission on Prisoners of War, Hostages and Missing Persons and other agencies have repeatedly urged international organisations, including the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), to assist in the release of Mr Guliyev and Mr Asgarov.



A blindfolded Dilgam Asgarov is led to his seat in the ‘courtroom’ organised by the illegal Armenian occupying forces

Baku respects Spanish territorial integrity

Commenting on the so-called ‘independence referendum’ held in the Catalonia region of Spain on 1 October, Hikmat Hajiyev, Spokesman, Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry, stressed that Azerbaijan respects the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Kingdom of Spain within its internationally-recognised borders. He concluded: “We are looking forward to seeing the existing situation settled by peaceful means, according to the Constitution and laws of Spain.”

Meanwhile, Professor Elnur Soltanov, Dean, Faculty of Public and International Affairs, Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy (ADA), expressed the view that impact of the ‘referendum’ provided support for the Azerbaijani stance regarding the conflict. Professor Soltanov commented: “The Spanish government used all possible preventative measures, and the court verdicts are plain and simple. However, these legal demands were not respected, so the Spanish government prevented it in a legal way... The behaviour of a respected EU country shows that the so-called ‘referendum’ held in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan was illegitimate and all the steps taken by Azerbaijan were lawful.”

Elkhan Shahinoglu, Director, Atlas Research Centre, stressed that the move was contrary to the Spanish Constitution. He explained: “If the referendum was agreed with Madrid, there would be no controversy. A referendum was held in Scotland too, but why was there no interference? There is a big difference between the Catalonia and Scotland referendums. That held in Scotland was agreed with the UK government. Therefore, there was no interference in the Scottish referendum. The vast majority of Scots voted against independence. However, the autonomous government made a decision without undertaking an agreement with Madrid and held such a referendum in order to split the state. Of course, the central government could not allow this.

“The difference is that, although the referendum in Catalonia was criticised, the Catalans have not yet set their self-determination as a nation, whilst the Armenians have already created a state called Armenia. Azerbaijan can never allow the establishment of a second Armenian state on its territory. We urge Europe to support territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, as well as Spain.”

Lithuanian books on Nagorno-Karabakh conflict published in Russian

Two books on the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh – originally published in Lithuanian – have now been translated into Russian. The books are *Tragedy of the Black Garden* by Gintaras Visockas and *Decisions of the Political Figures Who Changed the Fates of Nations* by Leonas Jurša.

The works provide evidence on the migration of Armenians from Turkey and Iran to Azerbaijani territory and the South Caucasus around 200 years ago. The authors also outline the terrorist

acts, ethnic cleansing and massacres enacted by Armenian nationalists against Azerbaijanis during the occupation of their territory. Since 2015, several prominent Lithuanian political scientists and historians have written books on the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. Lithuania was the first former Soviet Republic to declare independence from the Soviet Union on 11 March 1990 – less than two months after Azerbaijan made an unsuccessful bid to do so on 20 January 1990.

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