



MAGAZINE

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Photo: Terry Moore

NOVRUZ CELEBRATED AROUND THE UK

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Young Azerbaijani pianist astounds Frankfurt

Moving conflict film shown to Parisian cinéphiles

Moody's predicts strong mid-term potential for Azerbaijan

Saida Zulfugarova spreads the musical spirit of her homeland

April 2012

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TEAS EVENTS

24 April

What is a nation?

**Committee Room G – Black Rod's entrance, House of Lords,
Westminster, London, SW1A 0AA**

18.30–20.30hrs. Admission Free

The Lord Laird of Artigarvan invites all friends of TEAS to attend this discussion, led by James Dingley BSc (Hons) MA, M Phil, Ph.D, PGCE of the Frances Hucheson Institute. The event is supported by TEAS.

Please RSVP to info@fhinst.co.uk by 20 April.

2 May

TEAS Business Forum 2012

Azerbaijan and Turkey – Diverse Investment Opportunities

No.4 Hamilton Place, London, W1J 7BQ

08.30–20.00hrs. Admission Free

The second annual TEAS Business Forum will bring together investors, policy-makers, bankers, journalists, analysts, NGO representatives and government executives for an extensive programme, designed to:

- outline the opportunities and risks when undertaking business and trade in Azerbaijan
- provide updates on Azerbaijan's investment climate and investors' concerns
- discuss recommendations for new policies and governance practices to further promote investments in and by international and domestic businesses
- raise awareness of the non-oil growth sectors in the country to assist with achieving economic diversification
- contextualise developments with examples from the Turkish experience.

To see a draft programme and register online, go to <https://teas.eu/event/teas-business-forum-2012>

Affiliates



Azerbaijan's relevance to the West highlighted at King's College



The attentive audience gained a valuable insight into the evolving relationship between Azerbaijan and the West

On 15 March, the King's College War Studies Russian and Eurasian Research Group and the European Centre for Energy and Resource Security (EUCERS) held a half-day conference at King's College, London, entitled *Bridge or Barrier? The Role of Central Asia in 21st Century International Politics*. This was organised in co-operation with TEAS, and attended by delegates from both the academic and business worlds.

Murad Ismayilov, Doctoral Student, University of London, and Research Fellow, Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy, outlined the role of energy resources in state-building, explaining how Azerbaijani GDP had increased by an average of 21 per cent from 2006–10, due to the extraction of Azerbaijan's oil and gas resources. He predicted that Azerbaijan's relevance to the West would further increase after the construction of the Southern Corridor of pipelines, which will bring Caspian energy to Europe from Azerbaijan and its neighbours. Murad also concentrated on challenges facing the country, particularly the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.

Murad went on to give some definitions of sovereignty, explaining that, soon after regaining independence in 1991, Azerbaijan became a member of the UN, OSCE and CIS, amongst other organisations. This served to formalise its statehood and reduce the potential for future conflict. He also demonstrated how the country has sought to align itself with the West.

Vusal Abdullayev, First Secretary, Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the UK, highlighted the existing close relationship between Central Asia and Azerbaijan, indicating the potential for further co-operation. He stressed that, over the past 20 years, Azerbaijan has opened up its economy for co-operation with other

countries, and the energy sector has played an intrinsic role in this process. He stated: "Azerbaijan has implemented two big projects for transportation of its oil and natural gas to European markets, and the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (BTE) pipelines are already operational. At present, Azerbaijan is seen as a producer of oil and natural gas, and a potential transit route for energy resources from other countries, including those in Central Asia. Transportation infrastructure in Azerbaijan could be also used for the haulage of other goods to and from Central Asia."

Nasrine Amzour, Specialist in International Energy Security, Department of Energy and Climate Change, also revealed that the Stage 2 development of the Shah Deniz field would result in the production of an additional 10bm³ (bcm) of gas per annum.

Franco–Azerbaijani cultural relations to further develop

Abulfaz Garayev, Azerbaijani Minister of Culture and Tourism, met Frédéric Mitterrand, French Minister of Culture and Communication, to discuss opportunities for further development of the cultural relationship between the two countries. Garayev explained that emphasis was being placed on developing tourism in Azerbaijan, commenting: "The work continues to reconstruct museums, cultural facilities, and historical monuments. The country's tourism potential is being optimised."

He continued: "As a result of the work undertaken during the last few years, Azerbaijan has successfully hosted a number of high-profile international events. The promotion of Azerbaijani art in

The Louvre, the world's largest art museum, was a remarkable event for us."

Mitterrand acknowledged the extent of the construction work that has recently taken place in Baku, commenting: "We are pleased with your achievements and the projects you carry out to make your country more developed." He went on to explain that reciprocal meetings are contributing towards the development of economic, political and cultural relations between Azerbaijan and France. He concluded: "We support all initiatives aimed at strengthening our friendly relations."

TEAS activities outlined to Azerbaijani youth

Speaking at the inaugural congress of the World Azerbaijanis' Youth Union in Baku, Tale Heydarov, Chairman and Founder, TEAS, outlined the role of TEAS in raising awareness of the country across Europe. He initially explained TEAS' role in publishing articles in the European media and the making of films for screening on European television. Tale went on to reveal that US journalist Professor Thomas Goltz is concluding the editing of a film produced to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Azerbaijan regaining its independence in 1991. This film will include discussions between European diplomats and politicians regarding Azerbaijan's achievements over the past two decades.

He continued: "We aim to broadcast this film on television channels across the world. We are also using the internet to increase awareness of the country. In the UK, the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Azerbaijan now has over 60 members, and they have visited the country. These visits are very significant, as the members come and witness the development of Azerbaijan with their own eyes." Tale also focused on publications as a method of substantiating the Azerbaijani position: "TEAS has published many books, including *The Armenian Question in the Caucasus: Russian Archive Documents and Publications*, which has prompted objections from Armenians in the US."

NEWS IN BRIEF

'Like' TEAS or lose out

As part of the rationalisation of TEAS' social media strategy, the official TEAS Facebook site will become <http://on.fb.me/TEASFacebook> after 27 April, so please 'like' that site to remain informed on TEAS' activities. Following this, the other two existing accounts will no longer be updated.



Jeyranchol ranks amongst the most beautiful regions of Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan and NATO to jointly demine Soviet shooting range

Azerbaijan and NATO have signed an agreement to demine the largest military training facility for the former Soviet army in the South Caucasus, located in the Jeyranchol region on the Azerbaijani-Georgian border. The demining protocol was signed by the Azerbaijani National Agency for Mine Action (ANAMA) and NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency (NAMSA), and will be jointly funded.

The Jeyranchol project includes the clearing of mines and unexploded ordnances scattered across an area of 64 million m². Preparations for the project will start on 26 March, and it is expected that around 45 munitions clearance engineers and one mine-clearing vehicle will be involved in the operations.

Georgia acknowledges Azerbaijan's pivotal role

Speaking in Baku, at a joint press conference alongside Azerbaijani President Aliyev, Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili commented: "Georgia is growing rapidly, and the assistance of fraternal Azerbaijan has contributed crucially to this development. This is attributable to the assistance we receive from Azerbaijan. So, the independence of Azerbaijan also means Georgia's independence." He also welcomed Azerbaijan's leading position in the region and the nation's role in global politics, acknowledging: "Azerbaijan clearly plays a positive role in all matters, and we always sense Azerbaijan's support. This is the strength of our relationship and, in essence, this is the cornerstone of stability and development in the region."

Azerbaijani-Georgian Euro 2020 bid on the cards

During a speech to the Milli Majlis (Azerbaijani parliament), Georgian President Saakashvili announced that

Azerbaijan and Georgia would submit a joint bid to host the Euro 2020 football championship. This follows the example of a Dutch-Belgian bid in 2002 and an Austro-Swiss submission in 2008. UEFA will make its decision in 2014, although some bids will be eliminated next year.



Photo: Johan Oedman

Various other joint submissions for Euro 2020 are reportedly under discussion, although none have been officially confirmed. For example, it is thought that a Romanian-Hungarian-Bulgarian bid will be submitted, as will another Dutch-Belgian proposal. However, an Azerbaijani-Georgian Euro 2020 would not be the first major football event in the Caucasus, as the Russian city of Sochi is amongst the host cities for the 2018 World Cup.

Swedish Embassy in Baku to open in a few months

H.E. Mikael Eriksson, the newly-appointed Swedish Ambassador to Azerbaijan, has commented: "There is great potential for development of political, economic and trade relations between Azerbaijan and Sweden. I think that the two countries will particularly collaborate in the renewable energy sector."

He also noted that there is the potential for some Swedish companies to supply equipment for the Azerbaijani oil and gas industry. With regard to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Ambassador Eriksson

reiterated: "We support the activities of the OSCE Minsk Group, and believe that only a peaceful solution may be found to the conflict. The parties must reach a consensus." He revealed plans to open a Swedish Embassy in Baku at the end of Summer. Ambassador Eriksson is currently based in Stockholm, although he frequently visits Baku.

Baku to host Crans Montana Forum

Heydar Asadov, Chairman, Azerbaijani Chamber of Accounts, has revealed that the 23rd annual *Crans Montana Forum* (CMF) will be hosted in Baku from 28 June–1 July. This follows a decision made during a regular meeting in Brussels. The Forum will be entitled *Which energy for which world?*

The Crans Montana Forum is a Swiss-based international organisation, established in 1986 with the motto *Committed to a more humane world*. It aims to bring together business and international leaders to discuss various topics throughout the year.

NEWS IN BRIEF

TEAS assists relatives of French shootings

The murderous attacks that took place in the French towns of Montauban and Toulouse shocked all the religious communities in France. They triggered an emotional response from Azerbaijan, and prompted TEAS to offer moral and financial support, in partnership with the Association française des Victimes du Terrorisme (AFVT.org). By doing so, TEAS expresses its solidarity with all the victims' relatives and the families of the Ozar-Hatorah school in Toulouse.

Special price on OCA Magazine

Open Central Asia (OCA) is the partner publication for *TEAS Magazine*. This fascinating quarterly comprises articles on business and culture in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Mongolia and Uzbekistan. During the course of each year, OCA provides a great deal of insight into each country, and is useful for tourists and businesspersons alike.

The publisher has offered a 25 per cent reduction on an annual subscription for TEAS' friends, bringing it down to £12 for the UK (normally £16) or £20 for Europe/CIS (normally £25). To take advantage of this offer, e-mail publisher@ocamagazine.com by 31 May, quoting 'TEAS' in the subject header.

Novruz celebrated by over 600 in London



Photos: Terry Moore

The Baku-based Şərq Çırağı Children's Dance Group amazed and delighted all those in attendance



The beauty and grace of the dancers was remarkable



Students from the Caspian-Khazri School in London recited Azerbaijani poetry

The Victorian foundations of Gibson Hall in the City of London were shaken to their core on 15 March during an event staged to celebrate the ancient festival of Novruz. The evening was jointly organised by TEAS and the Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the UK, with the support of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

More than 600 Azerbaijanis and representatives from across London's international and diplomatic communities attended the event, making it one of the largest Novruz festivities to be held in the capital. The attendees enjoyed traditional food, music, and stunning dancing by the Şərq Çırağı Children's Dance Group – direct from Baku. Children from the Caspian-Khazri School in London, demonstrating that the expatriate community is keeping the language and culture alive, also recited Azerbaijani poetry.

Although the origins of Novruz remain shrouded in mystery, predating the advent of Christianity and Islam, it is generally recognised as celebrating the New Year and a time of rebirth at the start of Spring. In Azerbaijan, this festival for all the family is celebrated with a five-day Public Holiday, and symbolic acts include tree-planting, egg-painting, and the making of such pastries as pakhlava. Samani (wheat grass) normally forms the centerpiece for the festive table.

During the 75 years of Soviet rule, Novruz celebrations in Azerbaijan were unofficial and frequently suppressed. However, since the regaining of Azerbaijani independence in 1991, Novruz has become synonymous with the identity of the nation.

During the event, Ambassador Gurbanov, Azerbaijani Ambassador to the UK, explained: "This is a special day for all Azerbaijanis, and the main holiday for the country. In 2010, UNESCO recognised 21 March as the International Day of Novruz, and the preceding year it was inducted into the UNESCO List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This was the start of New Year in the ancient calendar of Azerbaijan. It represents a natural awakening, as spring knocks on our door, and is a great event for the family."

Tale Heydarov, Chairman and Founder, TEAS, continued: "This is a traditional, ancient holiday in Azerbaijan, and it is very important to celebrate it together, by tasting Azerbaijani food and sharing in the symbols of Novruz. I welcome all who have not previously visited Azerbaijan to do so, and the hosting of the *Eurovision Song Contest* in Baku during May provides a good reason to travel to the country." The success of this vibrant evening proved that Novruz remains alive and relevant, not only in Azerbaijan, but on a worldwide level.



Novruz provided young Azerbaijanis with a chance to embrace their culture

NEWS IN BRIEF

Koka in the Old City

An exhibition entitled *White Light*, by the great Georgian artist Koka Ramishvili (known simply by his first name in artistic circles), is taking place at the Kicik QualArt Gallery in Baku's Old City. Focusing on painting, photography, and video art, Ramishvili's work encapsulates emptiness and loneliness, yet is replete with hidden meanings. His videos harness the counterpoint of images, events, music and dialogue to achieve meaning, and he has commented: "I cannot imagine the existence of contemporary paintings without photo and video." To read an interview with Ramishvili in the exhibition guide, please go to <http://bit.ly/Koka>.

Azerbaijan takes centre stage on BBC primetime programme

Following the unveiling of the UK entry for the *Eurovision Song Contest*, to be hosted in Azerbaijan, BBC reporter Alex Riley travelled to Baku to report for *The One Show*. Here he experienced carpets, mugham, tea, dance and met the most passionate fan of UK contestant Engelbert Humperdinck in Azerbaijan. To view the report, go to <http://bit.ly/Engelbert1>.

Gruntlers keep the literary spirit alive

Gruntlers' Art Group are continuing to organise readings that of interest to the Azerbaijani literary community. Most notably, on 20 April, Dr Tamara Dragadze, Senior Researcher, Central European Consultancy, and Board Member for Azerbaijan House, will read from her novel on Rwanda and, on 18 May, Lord Laird, Chairman, TEAS Advisory Board, will speak on his impressions of the Caucasus and from his recently-published autobiography. The events start at 18.00hrs and will take place at Russkiy Mir, 23 Goodge Street, London, W1T 2PL. To find out more, contact David Parry on dparry777@hotmail.com.



Novruz in Bournemouth introduced many to Azerbaijani culture



Nigar Jamal (Nikki) performed the 2011 Eurovision winning song at the UCL Novruz event



Azerbaijanis and non-Azerbaijanis alike enjoyed Novruz in Exeter



Babek Bakhtavar entertained the Bournemouth crowd on saz and vocals

Enjoying Novruz around the UK

This year, Azerbaijanis around the UK were delighted to celebrate Novruz in their adopted cities, rather than coming to London for the largest celebration. In Bournemouth, the event took place at the Pier Theatre, where it was sponsored by the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR) and organised in collaboration with the Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the UK. The 500 attendees included diplomats and TEAS representatives, together with employees of Azerbaijan Airlines and the International Bank of Azerbaijan.

Matanat Taghiyeva, who is currently studying MSc International Business and Finance at Bournemouth University, outlined the development of the bilateral UK–Azerbaijani relationship over the past 20 years, particularly regarding educational and cultural exchange, and went on to mention many of the diaspora groups that are active in the UK. Matanat also explained the meaning of Novruz. Following this, there were performances by Babek Bakhtavar (saz and vocals) and Farhad Nishat (tenor), followed by traditional dancing and cuisine. Another celebration was organised by

the University of Exeter Azerbaijani Society, with the support of the Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the UK, SOCAR and the Azerbaijani Student Societies Association (ASSA-UK). Initially, Tural Mammadov, a student at Exeter Business School, informed the guests on the background of Novruz. Following this, Orkhan Mammadov, President, Exeter Azerbaijani Society and Co-Chair, ASSA-UK, welcomed the attendees and introduced a video about the activities of ASSA-UK. Shahla Ibrahimova, a member of the University of Exeter Azerbaijani Society, then gave a brief overview of Azerbaijani history and tourism. More than 150 guests enjoyed traditional food, music, and stunning dancing by Society members and others.

The Sheffield Azerbaijan Society at the University of Sheffield also celebrated Novruz at an event supported by SOCAR. Faig Abbasov and Gunay Bayramova, both students at Sheffield, opened the event by introducing Azerbaijan and explaining Novruz. The event continued with Azerbaijani national cuisine, and an exhibition of Karabakh carpets, national dress and musical instruments. Following this, brochures, journals, books, catalogues and maps about Azerbaijan were distributed. Four Azerbaijani students at Sheffield went on to perform *Yalli*, a

national dance, which was enthusiastically welcomed by the guests. All attendees later participated in the dances.

Several songs, including *Duydu*, *Gel ey Sahar* and *Sari Gelin*, were also performed by Ayaz Ibrahimov and Jelal Mammadzadeh, who are respectively studying at the universities of Oxford and Manchester. In particular, the exhibition of carpets from Nagorno-Karabakh informed the guests about the historical importance of this Armenian-occupied region.

At University College London (UCL), the Novruz celebration was organised by the UCL Azerbaijan Society in collaboration with the Kazakh, Uzbek and Kyrgyz societies. The Azerbaijani section of the evening included the *Lezginka* dance, followed by a recital by pianist Ayan Salakhova, who is a student at the Royal Academy of Music. Thereafter, London resident Nigar Jamal (known as Nikki), performed a solo version of *Running Scared*, the winning song for the Eurovision Song Contest 2011.

Farhad Aliyev, Chairman, UCL Azerbaijan Society, reflected on the universal heritage of Novruz and its significance as an integral element of the Azerbaijani national identity, following which attendees were able to experience Azerbaijani cuisine.



Khanlar Gasimov's *The Most Honourable* eerily combines silicon and human hair

Gasimov features in the first exhibition at the

Gazelli permanent space

The work of US-based Azerbaijani artist Khanlar Gasimov is currently being featured in the exhibition *Bodhi*, organised by the Gazelli Art House, founded and directed by his compatriot Mila Askarova. Forming the final instalment in a series of exhibitions inspired by the five classical elements, this is the first exhibition to take place in Gazelli's permanent space at 39 Dover Street, London, W1S 4NN. Gasimov's work is inspired by Azerbaijani classical poetry, demonstrating a philosophical approach to art. *Bodhi* includes his acclaimed sculpture *The Most Honourable*, which is an umbrella made from silicon, simulating human skin, combined with human hair. This symbolically represents a shield, whilst the simulated human nature of the object transforms it into a being that is exposed to its surroundings. The exhibition continues until 19 April. Please visit www.gazelliarthouse.com for more information.

Azerbaijani conflict film presented in Paris

On 3 April, the Azerbaijani film *Hostage* (Girov), directed in 2006 by Eldar Guliev, was screened during a festival of 'art' films entitled *L'Europe autour de l'Europe*. The evening was organised by TEAS and Confrontations Europe. The screening was attended by around 70 cinéphiles, being followed by a discussion in the presence of Qurban Ismayilov, the lead actor. Attendees then enjoyed a performance by the Azerbaijani singer Tarana, before heading to an Azerbaijani buffet.

In her inaugural speech as President of Confrontations Europe, Claude Fischer expressed her joy at seeing Azerbaijan represented for the first time amongst the films screened in this year's festival. She then gave the floor to Eliza Pieter, Head, TEAS France, who thanked Confrontations Europe for this initiative and stressed that such events enabled TEAS to promote cultural exchange between the Azerbaijani and French peoples. Irena Bilic, Director, *L'Europe autour de l'Europe*, introduced the film and thanked Qurban Ismayilov for travelling from Baku to Paris on this occasion. She reminded the



Acclaimed Azerbaijani actor Qurban Ismayilov gave a valuable insight into his characterisation of a captive Armenian

audience of the purpose of the festival – to present rarely-shown films from various cinematic traditions to a European audience (see the IMDb summary plot at: <http://imdb.to/Girov1>)

During the question-and-answer session, Ismayilov and the audience discussed such topics as the development of the film industry in Azerbaijan and the reaction of the Azerbaijani audience towards him after playing the role of an Armenian captive in *Hostage*. For Ismayilov, the film sent out a message of peace, and reminded viewers that before being enemies, men were brothers, husbands and fathers. He also stressed that the film paid tribute to women's pain and losses brought about by war. One viewer asked Ismayilov why the film was produced in 2006, yet set in the late 1980s. The actor replied that it is always difficult to talk about war when it remains fresh in the viewers' collective consciousness. He also explained that the taking of hostages was a frequent occurrence at this stage of the conflict.

Eldarova's violin fairytale attracts plaudits

A Proud Violin, a new children's book by Aytan Eldorava, has been shortlisted for the People's Book Prize Award, run by The Publishers' Association, the winner of which will be announced on 20 May. It has also become a 'top-rated product' at Waterstone's chain of bookshops. Illustrated by Irina, Aytan's mother, the book tells the story of a beautiful violin, and therefore serves to introduce children to the world of orchestral music. Together with the main heroine – the violin – young readers learn about the dangers of pride. The illustrations are designed for young readers to colour, providing hours of amusement.

Aytan (writing under the *nom de plume* of Sofia) has since participated in an official book launch and signing at Daunt Books in Fulham, London, and started a programme of readings, organised by Westminster Libraries' service. To order a copy, go to <http://amzn.to/Proudviolin>.

Eurovision Fever mounts

The heads of delegations from the 42 countries competing in the *Eurovision Song Contest* met in Baku to view preparations for the forthcoming event, to be held in Baku, the final of which takes place on 26 May. They were informed that Ictimai, an Azerbaijani national television channel, is working to present an extraordinary and dazzling show. They also had a sneak preview of the new Baku Crystal Hall, which has been constructed for the contest.

During the two-day meeting, the delegation heads were treated to the best of Azerbaijani hospitality and had the chance to experience the beauty of the country, and the sights and sounds of Baku. All were impressed with the kindness and hospitality of the Azerbaijani people. Meanwhile, it has been announced that established singer Sabina Babayeva will represent Azerbaijan in the contest, performing the song *When the Music Dies*, which blends Azerbaijani mugham with contemporary music, and includes the traditional instruments of the balaban and kamancha. To hear the song, go to <http://sabina.eurovisiontalents.com>. The UK entry is *Love Will Set You Free*, performed by veteran singer Engelbert Humperdinck.

17-year-old Azerbaijani piano star shines bright in Frankfurt

On the evening of 24 March, the Mozart Room of the Old Opera House (Alte Oper) in Frankfurt am Main resounded to the sound of eight of the most talented piano students studying in music colleges across Germany or their international partner universities. These were the finalists in the prestigious *Deutscher Pianistenpreis* (German Piano Award), now in its second year, worth €20,000 (£16,700). Organised by the International Piano Forum Frankfurt, the sponsors included TEAS and the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijani Republic (SOCAR).

Following an introduction by Dr Petra Roth, Mayor of Frankfurt, amongst others, the contestants from Azerbaijan, Georgia, Russia, South Korea, and Ukraine performed a range of challenging works to demonstrate their talents before an international judging panel. The youngest participant was Azerbaijani contestant Toghrul Huseynli, aged 17, who attracted a warm ovation for his sensitive interpretation of Chopin's demanding *Polonaise in F Sharp Minor*. A graduate of the Bulbul Music School and the Hajibeyov Academy of Music, Toghrul is now studying at the Hochschule für Musik in Cologne under Professor Nina Tichman, a graduate of the revered Juilliard School in New York. The winner of the *Deutscher Pianistenpreis* was Lukas Geniussas of Russia.

Saida Zulfugarova – an Azerbaijani in Paris



*Saida Zulfugarova reflects on the evocative soundscape she created to accompany performances of *In the Footsteps of Ali and Nino**

Saida Zulfugarova ranks amongst the leading Azerbaijani classical pianists and musical educators. Resident in France for a decade, she has carved a niche as a staunch proponent of her nation's classical music legacy in the West. Participating in a wide range of musical permutations, her versatility is remarkable. Saida has recently been originator, project leader and pianist for *In the Footsteps of Ali and Nino*, a musical reimaging of the famous Azerbaijani novel by Kurban Said. TEAS interviewed Saida following her performance at the launch of TEAS France in Paris.

What prompted your initial interest in the piano?

I was born into a musical family. Fazil Zulfugarov, my father, was an engineer and a very talented person who loved music deeply, played the violin and piano, and sang at home. Zohra Zulfugarova, my mother, is a piano teacher at the music school, and we always listened to lots of music together. My parents performed Azerbaijani folk music and European classical music. It was natural for me to listen to classical music concerts and traditional mugham, and I am forever grateful to my parents. I recall receiving a gift from my parents that contained records of classical music and a book on the history of music. I listened to this like children's stories, and, when I was three years old, my parents took me to see Rossini's opera *The Barber of Seville*, featuring Muslim Magomaev, the great Azerbaijani baritone.

I fell in love with music, and it was clear from my childhood that I would be a pianist and give concerts. The piano fascinates me, with its rich timbres, power, beauty of expression and infinite nuances. For me, it remains a magical instrument.

How are you related to Ogtay Zulfugarov? Did he encourage and influence you?

I knew Ogtay Zulfugarov from my childhood, as he is my first cousin, once removed. I often played for him and asked his advice. He is a great musician, one of the leading composers of Azerbaijan, and a pupil of Kara Karayev. He regularly gave me advice and direction, and it was simultaneously a great responsibility and joy to play before him.

When was your talent first recognised?

My parents noticed my musical abilities at a very young age. I sang a great deal, and loved dancing. I could listen to classical music for hours without moving and, above all, was irresistibly attracted to the piano that was in the living room.

You studied at both the Asaf Zeynalli Music School and the Baku Music Academy. Was the focus on Azerbaijani or Western composers?

The piano teachers at my musical establishments were first-rate. My piano teacher at the Asaf Zeynalli Music School, Novella Petrovna Netupskaya, forged my piano technique, developed my musical tastes, and taught me a

great deal regarding interpretation of the classical and romantic repertoire. I mainly focused on Western classical music, although Azerbaijani classical music was also studied.

At the Baku Music Academy, I became a student of Professor Ogtay Abaskuliev. During the five years we worked together, he took my piano playing towards musical maturity, focusing on works by Beethoven, Chopin, Bach, and Liszt, amongst others. I was also a student of Professor Azer Rzaev, the eminent composer and brilliant violinist, who inaugurated my love for chamber music. My second piano teacher at the Baku Music Academy was Professor Rafik Kuliev, who is still sadly missed. He was a landmark personality in the Azerbaijani piano world and a great artist. He taught me the art of interpretation, and gave me the additional tools to achieve true virtuosity and hone my performance technique.

Professor Elmira Abbasova was my professor of Azerbaijani music history. She had witnessed the creation of major Azerbaijani classical works, and left a rich legacy of writings and musicological books on the subject. Aida Huseynova is another brilliant musicologist who now teaches at the Jacobs School of Music in the state of Indiana, USA, and was my professor of European music history. I wish to express my deep gratitude to all my teachers for their hard work, patience and knowledge.

Why did you move to Paris in 2002?

I was about to finish my studies for the 'aspirantura' at the Baku Music Academy and received an invitation to give a concert in the Tanzmatten Concert Hall in Alsace, France. At that moment, I decided to evaluate the possibility of continuing my studies in France. I registered at the faculty of Musicology at the Sorbonne University, and remained in Paris, which is a city with an extraordinary cultural and musical life, and is very rich and intense. It was a challenge to make a career here, due to the high level of classical music.

Where have you performed and taught?

I have given piano recitals as part of the concert season organised by the cultural programming service of the Sorbonne. I have also worked with many musicians and singers in various auditoria, such as the American Cathedral and Protestant churches around Paris. I was also selected for the Festival Artistique de Paris, where



Saida relaxes with violinist Priscilla Lachat Sarrete following the moving conclusion of Ali and Nino

I played for two years. I give many performances in the Ile-de-France region of Paris, and have been a teacher at Provins Conservatory since 2003, where I regularly give concerts.

It is clearly your mission to promote the work of great Azerbaijani composers, such as Kara Karayev, Tofik Kuliev and Musa Mirzoev. How have they been received in France?

I am very pleased to introduce to the classical music of my country to audiences. Here, it is virtually unknown repertoire, and people often comment that they have discovered this beautiful music during my performances. Listeners are always curious and appreciate this repertoire, ask me about these composers, and write down their names. I believe that my mission is to transmit and share the musical richness of Azerbaijan with others.

You recently participated in the Visit to Azerbaijan festival, organised by the Dmitri Shostakovich International Organisation, where you gave an illustrated lecture on Azerbaijani

classical music. Which composers did you cover, and do you feel that the lecture served to raise awareness of Azerbaijan's great musical legacy?

I have known Emmanuel Utwiller, Director, Dmitri Shostakovich International Organisation, for many years. We first met when I was researching the piano music of Kara Karayev at the Sorbonne. I also invited him to my concerts, and he participated in an evening dedicated to the 90th anniversary of Karayev's birth at the Sorbonne in 2008. Knowing of my passion for Azerbaijani classic music, Emmanuel contacted me about his concept for two days of Azerbaijani music.

Emmanuel and I collaborated on the plans for months, and I was given a free hand in the selection of composers and the programme. I made a trip to Azerbaijan to find documents and scores. Emmanuel's faith was most encouraging, and I felt great responsibility and joy working on this project, which resulted in two days of concerts and lectures that I gave at the Shostakovich centre in the presence

of Irina Shostakovich, the composer's widow, and Franghiz Ali-Zadeh, Chair, Composers' Union of Azerbaijan.

The first day of the festival concerned tradition and modernity in Azerbaijani classical music. I presented the history of Azerbaijani music, and then outlined the achievements of Uzeyir Hajibeyli, his major works, and the pivotal role he played in Azerbaijani musical history. I then spoke about Fikret Amirov, Ismayil Hacıbəyov, Jevdet Hacıyev, Fəraj Karayev, Tofik Kuliev, and Musa Mirzoev, and interpreted their works on the piano. We also heard excerpts from symphonic works and Hajibeyli's *Koroglu* opera. The first day ended with Ogtay Zulfugarov's *Trio for Piano, Violin and Cello*, dedicated to Dmitri Shostakovich, which was acclaimed by the dedicatee and was premiered in Baku in 1957. I invited two French musicians, Martial Boudrant (violin) and Pierre Avedik (cello), to perform this alongside myself.

The second day was entitled *Kara Karayev and his teacher Dmitri Shostakovich*, during which I spoke about the years of study and friendship that joined these two great composers until the end of their lives. I also addressed the influences on Shostakovich, who closely followed the development of compositional technique in Azerbaijan. I played Kara Karayev's *24 Préludes for Piano*, and we listened to excerpts from his ballets and symphonic music. Many audience members questioned as to how they could have been previously unaware of this music. They really appreciated its quality, and the information they received during that weekend.

What do you think can be done to further promote Azerbaijani classical music in the West?

There is much work to undertake in this area, and I regard this as a matter of great importance, as musical culture is a treasure and an important asset towards promoting a country. A long-term action plan must be developed, the first hurdle being that Azerbaijani music scores cannot be found in the West. A publishing house should be created that will publish the major scores by Azerbaijani composers, whereas currently whenever I need a score, I must launch a search operation in Baku. Access to scores should be simpler, and it should be possible to order scores via the internet. It is also necessary to facilitate access to the Azerbaijani radio archive, observing copyright, yet making the music available on CD or on the internet.



Saida's mission is to raise awareness of her homeland's classical music in the West



Saida with Irina Shostakovich at the recent Visit to Azerbaijan festival in Paris

Many concerts featuring Azerbaijani musicians take place across Europe every year, but we must broaden the audience for music from the country. For example, it would be worthwhile to organise concerts aimed at students, as young people are always eager to discover. It is also necessary to create partnerships with key players in the cultural and musical life of Europe. For example, I have been invited by the city of Poitiers to deliver a presentation about Azerbaijani music. I am planning a conference, a concert, the screening of a documentary on Kara Karayev and mini masterclasses on the Azerbaijani repertoire, aimed at children.

Symphonic scores should be sent to orchestral leaders to stimulate interest in this music, and cultural centres should be opened, which should offer a diverse programme of activities. The world today demands new forms of expression, together with the interaction between various art forms and different cultures. There are thousands of ways to present culture.

Despite their close friendship, Kara Karayev's work remains almost unknown outside of the former Soviet Union, whereas Shostakovich's work is very well-known and frequently performed in the West. Why is this?

Dmitri Shostakovich ranks as one of the greatest composers of the 20th Century, whose personality was embodied in his compositions. It should be remembered that the music industry is dependent on successful marketing, serving to create increased awareness of the composer's work. In the case of Shostakovich, all his works are published and made available by Irina, his widow, through Dmitri Shostakovich Publishers. Such publishers as Sikorski Musik Verlag specialise in the publication of music from ex-Soviet countries, and it would be in their remit to publish 20th century music from Azerbaijan. This also increases the amount of recordings made for broadcast and commercial purposes, and these can be reviewed in the specialist media. Furthermore, serious musicological critiques need to be published in western musical journals.

Karayev's music has fascinated me since my childhood, and has been the subject of my musicological research and, if I did not have other commitments, I would like to study for a Ph.D on his work. His music is universal, and easily accessible to the western public's ears. It's all about engaging over the long-run, placing the music in its socio-historical context

and taking the music into the concert halls, people's homes and ipods.

What was your involvement in the show *In the Footsteps of Ali and Nino*, performed at the Sorbonne University?

Ali and Nino, by Kurban Said, was published in 1937 and has been subsequently translated into more than 30 languages. It is set just prior to the foundation of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic in 1918, being a Muslim-Christian love story between a young Azerbaijani aristocrat and a young Georgian noble. As a musicologist and pianist, I determined the sound track for the novel, including both Georgian and Azerbaijani traditional music and works by Azer Rzaev, Uzeyir Hajibeyli, Vagif Mustafazadeh, Fritz Kreisler and, of course, Kara Karayev, amongst many others.

To contact Saida for information on Kara Karayev and other Azerbaijani composers, e-mail: zulfigarova_saida@yahoo.fr. To see Saida perform *Gaytagi* by Tofik Kuliev, please go to <http://bit.ly/gaytagi>



Tale Heydarov, Chairman and Founder, TEAS centre) and chairpersons of various UK Azerbaijani student societies participated in this commemorative act

A living remembrance of the Khojaly victims

Members of the Azerbaijani community travelled to a clearing in St. Albans, north of London, to plant the final 13 of 613 saplings, in an event organised by TEAS. Each of these saplings represented one of the men, women and children whose lives were cut short two decades ago during the massacre in Khojaly, in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan.

In a solemn ceremony, these living memorials were dedicated to the victims, and a plaque on a stone plinth was unveiled. After planting the final tree, Tale Heydarov, Chairman

and Founder, TEAS, commented: "This year, 613 trees are being planted to commemorate the victims of Khojaly on the 20th anniversary of the tragedy. This will be a memorial for the future, and we will return to this site each year. It is important to keep their memory alive." Groups of school children and representatives of Azerbaijani student societies in London also planted some of the final saplings, including the Chairpersons of the societies at University College, London (UCL); the School for Oriental and African Studies (SOAS); The University of Westminster; and Goldsmith's, University of London.

This symbolic act formed part of a series of commemorative events

organised by TEAS across London to remember Khojaly, which also included a landmark concert of Azerbaijani and Western classical music at St. John's, Smith Square, attended by around 300 people (see *TEAS Magazine*, March 2012, p.5), and the dedication of a bench in Battersea Park. To view a short TEAS documentary entitled *Khojaly – a massacre ignored*, visit www.teas.eu/content/khojaly-massacre-ignored.



School children from across London participated in the Khojaly treeplanting

NEWS FROM BRUSSELS

TEAS Belgium reports that, in recent months, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) from the Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) have discussed amendments to two Draft Reports containing the European Parliament's (EP) recommendations to the Council of the European Union, European Commission and European External Action Service (EEAS) regarding negotiations on the EU-Azerbaijan (Rapporteur Anelli Jääteenmäki MEP) and EU-Armenia (Rapporteur Tomasz Poreba MEP) Association Agreements.

In total, 134 amendments for the EU-Azerbaijan Association Agreement report were submitted, together with 121 amendments for the EU-Armenia Association Agreement. The main observation by TEAS Belgium is that the cases and aspirations towards the EU by Azerbaijan and Armenia are different. Whilst Armenia is clearly interested in the Association Agreement, Azerbaijan would prefer to focus on a strategic partnership with the EU.

According to an amendment by Knut Fleckenstein MEP, Azerbaijan is recognised as an "important regional player." Evgeni Kirilov MEP noted that: "the EU has a strategic interest in the stability [...] of the region," and Fiorello Provera MEP acknowledged that Azerbaijan plays "a positive role in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy and contributes to the solution of the EU's energy security problems."

However, it is the view of TEAS that the report fails to clearly recognise Azerbaijani territorial integrity, nor condemns the ongoing Armenian occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh and the seven adjacent regions. TEAS subsequently issued a press release, highlighting these omissions. However, the report acknowledges the progress made in various sectors, such as transparency, information and communications technology (ICT) e-governance and developing conformity with EU standards.

In an amendment, Armenia is, however, soundly condemned. Vytautas Landsbergis MEP commented that Armenia has European ambitions,

yet "did not show sufficient will to resolve the armed conflict with Azerbaijan in accordance with international law and European standards." In another amendment, the MEPs Inese Vaidere and Kristiina Ojuland stated: "[...] concerning reports exist regarding illegal activities exercised by Armenian troops on the occupied Azerbaijani territories, namely, regular military manoeuvres; the renewal of military hardware and personnel; and the deepening of defensive echelons. They then explain that Armenia continues the occupation of the Nagorno-Karabakh region and seven adjacent districts of [...] Azerbaijan, violating the fundamental norms and principles of international law and undermining the UN Security Council Resolutions passed against the occupation."

In the AFET Committee, the EP is convinced about the crucial role of the OSCE Minsk Group, and adopts the idea of the EU replacing France. Both the reports will be debated and voted in the EP Plenary Session in Strasbourg during April.



Azerbaijani President Aliyev addressed the Euronest meeting

Nagorno-Karabakh highlighted at Euronest assembly in Baku

Energy and security, a stronger role for parliamentary democracy and civil society, and economic assistance to the EU's Eastern neighbours, were the key topics of the second Euronest meeting that concluded on 4 April in Baku.

Kristian Vigenin MEP, Co-President, Euronest, admitted that: "Nagorno-Karabakh was one of the most dividing issues in this parliamentary assembly." He commended the ability of Armenia and Azerbaijan to sit at the same table, despite their difficulties, and continued: "What we have seen in this session is a very European approach, and I am proud of it."

Whilst expressing hope that the conflict would "not last forever", Vigenin explained that Euronest was not the "format" in which bilateral conflicts could be solved, and placing this issue high on the agenda would only split members. He continued: "We can only strive to provide more trust, understanding, and channels of dialogue." Boris Tarasyuk MEP, Co-President, Euronest, commented: "Unfortunately the Soviet Union has left us this very sad heritage, and the problems in the Eastern neighbourhood are the direct consequences of this."

OSCE Minsk Group requests exertion of greater political will

The OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs countries – the US, Russia and France – have urged Azerbaijan and Armenia to demonstrate the necessary 'political will' to find a lasting settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. This statement was issued by Hillary Clinton, US Secretary-of-State; Sergei Lavrov, Russian Foreign Minister; and Alain

Juppé, French Foreign Minister, to mark the 20th anniversary of the formal request to convene a conference aimed at achieving a negotiated settlement to the conflict, which led to the formation of the OSCE Minsk Group. The statement continued: "A new generation has come of age in the region, with no first-hand memory of Armenians and Azerbaijanis living side by side, and prolonging these artificial divisions only deepens the wounds of war. For this reason, we urge the leaders of the sides to prepare their populations for peace, not war."

However, the Co-Chairs acknowledged that: "Progress toward peace has been made," citing joint presidential statements from the OSCE Minsk Group over the last three years, outlining elements of a framework towards negotiating a comprehensive peace settlement. They went on to recall a statement from Azerbaijani President Aliyev, Armenian President Sargsyan, and Russian President Medvedev, where a pledge was made to reach agreement on the Basic Principles.

The Co-Chairs concluded: "We urge the leaders of the sides to complete work, as soon as possible, on the framework agreement and subsequent final settlement – based on the Helsinki Final Act principles of non-use or threat of force, territorial integrity, and self-determination and the equal rights of peoples; the United Nations Charter; and the norms and principles of international law."

March Days remembered after almost a century

On 31 March, Azerbaijanis across the world commemorated the 94th anniversary of the Soyqırım, also known as the March Days. From 30 March–2 April 1918, the armed units of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, supported by the Soviet Bolsheviks, undertook the mass killing of Azerbaijanis

in the city of Baku and its surroundings. According to contemporaneous reports in the *New York Times*, nearly 12,000 Azerbaijani civilians were massacred during these four tragic days. Since 1998, 31 March is commemorated in Azerbaijan as the Day of Soyqırım, in remembrance of the massacres and deportations of Azerbaijanis by Armenians throughout the 20th Century.

Westerwelle stresses need for swift settlement of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

According to the German magazine *Stern*, Guido Westerwelle, German Foreign Minister, has reiterated the need to expedite resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. During a trip the South Caucasus, Westerwelle met Armenian President Sargsyan and discussed possible methods for settling the conflict. During a press conference alongside Edward Nalbandian, his Armenian counterpart, Westerwelle called on the conflicting sides to accept compromise and exert all efforts towards achieving peaceful conflict resolution.

The report in *Stern* underlined that Nagorno-Karabakh is a territory of Azerbaijan, according to international law, and these lands remain under Armenian occupation, which is almost entirely dependant on Russia for armaments and supplies. Westerwelle also recognised that resolution of the conflict will play a vital role in ensuring prosperity of the South Caucasus.

Armenian military parade to be held in Shusha

The *de facto* Armenian authorities in Nagorno-Karabakh have revealed plans to organise an unprecedented and provocative military parade in Shusha, the capital of the Azerbaijani region of Nagorno-Karabakh, on 9 May, to commemorate the 20th anniversary of their invasion. The display will include the infantry, armoured vehicles and the airforce.

According to *Trend News*, Aydin Mirzazade, Azerbaijani MP, recalled: "The parade, which Armenia held in Yerevan last September, was a frivolous and ill-prepared show. This event, which will be held in the Azerbaijani occupied lands by the disorganised, poorly-equipped Armenian Army, cannot be accurately called a parade. The Armenian people are interested in resolving everyday social issues, security and integration into the global community, rather than the claims of field commanders."



The proposed petrochemicals facility has already attracted investors from around the world

Azerbaijan to invest €13bn in petrochemicals plant

The State Oil Company of the Azerbaijani Republic (SOCAR) is preparing to construct an oil and gas processing and petrochemical complex near Baku. The total cost of the project is estimated at €13bn (£10.7bn), of which 30 per cent will be supplied by SOCAR and the Azerbaijani government, with the remaining 70 per cent coming from private investors.

In a statement, Tofiq Gahramanov, Vice-President, SOCAR, explained that the complex would be commissioned in 2020 and comprise 30 processing plants and its own thermal power plant. It is expected to process 10m tonnes of oil and 10bn m³ (bcm) of gas per annum. The complex will also produce 670,000 tonnes of polyethylene and 550,000 tonnes of polypropylene. The estimated project payback period is 6–7 years. Gahramanov revealed that investors in Japan, the US, Korea and Italy had demonstrated an interest in the project.

Azerbaijani economy: strong mid-term potential

Moody's, the international ratings agency, has predicted strong potential for Azerbaijan's medium-term economic growth. The agency justified its ranking, commenting: "Given the country's large oil and gas reserves, Azerbaijan's medium-term economic growth potential is strong, although a lack of economic diversification could hinder growth in the long term, if not addressed." The Azerbaijani economy's financial robustness is ranked highly, with government debt ratios expected to remain low in the medium-term.

The statement continued: "Azerbaijan runs a large current account surplus, which is estimated at 27.2 per cent

in 2011, slightly below its 2010 level of 29 per cent, due to a temporary disruption in oil production. However, the consolidated budget, including revenues from the State Oil Fund of the Azerbaijani Republic (SOFAR), that usually register sizeable surpluses, are estimated at 9.8 per cent for 2011."

Moody's goes on to acknowledge that the country has 'moderate' susceptibility to event risk, due to the continuing Armenian occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh and the seven surrounding regions. It continues: "Economic and financial event risks, on the other hand, are both ranked very low. The outlook on the government's bond ratings is positive, reflecting our expectation of further improvements in Azerbaijan's already strong government finances, together with the country's institutional capacity supporting the prudent management of its oil windfall."

Meanwhile, a newly-published report from Fitch Ratings states that the credit metrics of Azerbaijan's banks have stabilised since the height of the global financial crisis, with current high oil prices supporting sector asset quality and liquidity. Dmitry Abramov, Deputy Director for Financial Institutions in the CIS, Fitch Ratings, predicted that loan growth in 2012 would remain broadly aligned with the 21 per cent expansion reported for 2011. New credit is being extended primarily to the retail and small- and medium-sized enterprise (SME) segments, an expansion supported by the currently moderate leverage in the economy: loans/GDP stood at 20 per cent by the end of 2011, with loans/non-oil GDP at 45 per cent. However, weaknesses in the corporate sector; a deceleration of real GDP growth rates; and the tighter monetary stance by the authorities are constraining credit expansion.

Plans for Kyrgyz oil refinery unveiled

SOCAR is negotiating with authorities in Kyrgyzstan to establish a refinery in the country. Although the project may boost the Kyrgyz economy, it remains unclear whether it will help wean Bishkek away from Russian energy supplies, or force Kyrgyzstan to transfer its dependence on Russian refined fuel to Russian crude oil.

A SOCAR delegation visited Bishkek in early March and, according to the Kyrgyz Ministry of Energy, the group

visited potential locations in Chui Province, and discussed investment, tax, and trade regulations. The visit came in the wake of a January meeting between Almazbek Atambayev, President, Kyrgyzstan, and Rovnag Abdullayev, President, SOCAR, in Bishkek.

Under the proposed schedule, SOCAR will complete construction of the facility by the end of 2013, at a cost of \$100m (£62.9m), and will have an annual output of 2m tonnes of refined products. At least 40 per cent of this will be destined for foreign markets. Tajikistan would be an obvious destination, as it is also currently dependent on Russia for refined oil products. The APA agency has acknowledged that China is also a likely market.

The refinery could help Kyrgyzstan insulate its market from fuel-price shocks, which have caused extensive challenges in the past. In April 2010, Russia's anger with then-President Kurmanbek Bakiyev led Moscow to suddenly cancel longstanding preferential export duties on fuel to Kyrgyzstan, resulting in an immediate 25 per cent increase in petrol prices. During the following week, Bakiyev was ousted in a popular uprising. Assuming Bishkek manages to navigate around any concerns regarding Moscow, an oil refinery could bring much needed employment, and perhaps price stability, to Kyrgyzstan.

NEWS IN BRIEF

TEAS Business Forum – register now

Interest from far and wide has been received for the TEAS Business Forum, which will take place on 2 May from 08.30–20.00hrs at No.4 Hamilton Place, London, W1J 7BQ. Entitled *Azerbaijan and Turkey – Diverse Investment Opportunities*, the impressive roster of speakers will include Lord Newby, Co-Chair, Liberal Democrat Treasury Parliamentary Policy Committee; Ibrahim Arinc, Energy Advisor to the Turkish President; and Vugar Farman Aliyev, Managing Partner, KPMG Azerbaijan. To view the proposed programme and register free of charge, go to <https://teas.eu/event/teas-business-forum-2012>.



Taxi to Azerbaijan

Manganese Bronze, the manufacturer of London's iconic black cabs, is set to return to profitability after a surge in exports to Azerbaijan. In February, it shipped 500 vehicles to Baku, following the receipt of a \$27m (£17m) order for 1000 black cabs last year from the Baki Taksi Company, established to develop Azerbaijan's transport system. Furthermore, it has indicated to Manganese Bronze that it could order a further 3,000 cabs during the next

two years for its London Taxi Service Project. Sales of black cabs in the UK have plummeted in recent years, due to the durability of the vehicles manufactured by Manganese Bronze. All taxis supplied to Azerbaijan will be fitted with credit card payment devices.

EU requests Southern Gas Corridor solution

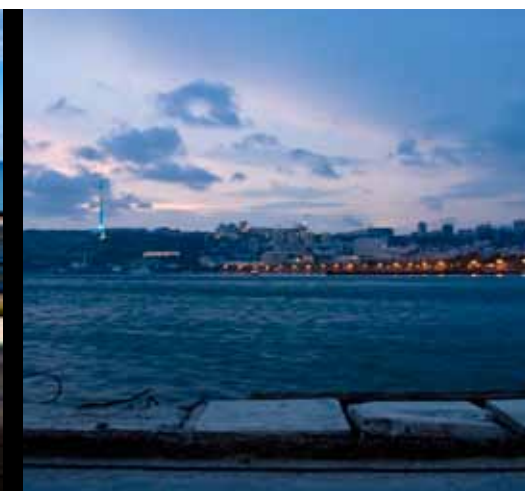
Roland Kobia, Head, EU Delegation to Azerbaijan, has stated that the EU supports the development of an ambitious, long-term solution to the Southern Corridor of gas pipelines, together with the evolution of a unified transportation framework. This would facilitate the exporting of the gas that will be produced from the Shah Deniz 2 field; other prospective Azerbaijani gas; and eventually Turkmen gas.

Speaking at a press conference in Baku, Kobia acknowledged the importance of ensuring that the infrastructure options for transporting resources from Shah Deniz 2 are scalable. He continued: "The scalability must be guaranteed to be certain that the selected infrastructure can be easily upgraded technically and legally, in order that it can automatically accommodate

new volumes, as new gas becomes available."

Kobia said that the EU is observing, with great interest, the latest developments around the new pipeline proposal, making apparent reference to the South-East Europe Pipeline (SEEP), a route proposed by oil giant BP. Kobia continued: "However, the work needed to translate these ideas and concepts into a mature project should neither delay, nor undermine, the Shah Deniz 2 gas delivery schedule."

In February, the BP-led Azerbaijan International Operating Consortium (AIOC), which is developing the Shah Deniz 2 field, decided to exclude the proposed Interconnector Turkey-Greece-Italy (ITGI) from the list of projects being considered to export Azerbaijani gas to European markets, thus making the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) the preferred route for the exporting of Azerbaijani gas to Italy. The Nabucco pipeline and SEEP are also being considered as possible transportation options for gas from Shah Deniz 2. The reserves of Shah Deniz 2 are estimated to be 1.2tn m³ (tcm), and its development will enable Azerbaijan to export an additional 10bn³ of gas to Europe per year.



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AZERBAIJAN: QUICK FACTS

Official name: The Republic of Azerbaijan

Capital: Baku

Area: 86,600km²

Population: 9.2m

Density: 104 inhab./km²

Urban population: 51.8 per cent

Population of main cities, excluding suburbs: Baku (2,500,000); Gandja (300,000); Sumgait (270,000); Mingacevir (95,000)

Religions: Religions: Muslim (93.4 per cent), Christian (4.8 per cent), Others (1.8 per cent)

Principal exports: Oil, gas, aluminium, carpets

Official language: Azerbaijani

Business languages: English and Russian

Monetary indicators	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Average annual exchange rate for US\$1	0.86	0.82	0.81	0.80	0.79

Exchange rates as of 10.4.12: AZN1=US\$1.27; US\$1=AZN0.79; AZN1=£0.80; £1=AZN1.25; AZN1=€0.97; €1=AZN1.03

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