

# TEAS

M A G A Z I N E



CULTURE | BUSINESS | PUBLIC AFFAIRS



## JENNIFER LOPEZ LIGHTS UP BAKU

**Also in this issue:**

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Swiss film director Eileen Hofer gives a personal view on modern-day Baku

10 / 2012

[www.teas.eu](http://www.teas.eu)

# Welcome to The European Azerbaijan Society

The European Azerbaijan Society (TEAS) is a pan-European organisation dedicated to promoting Azerbaijani culture, business and public affairs to international audiences. TEAS is also actively involved in helping create a sense of community amongst expatriate Azerbaijanis.

TEAS was launched in November 2008, having initially been established as the London Azerbaijan Society four years earlier. The organisation now has offices in the UK, Belgium, France and Germany, together with a representative office in Azerbaijan.

TEAS has three main facets to its operations:

- Culture – TEAS raises awareness of Azerbaijan's rich and vibrant culture to a worldwide audience by organising cultural events and operating as a networking centre.
- Business – TEAS supports its membership of European and Azerbaijani businesses. It provides a platform for organisations to establish links and strengthen their existing business relationships via a programme of networking opportunities across the region.
- Public Affairs – TEAS works to increase awareness about Azerbaijan amongst key opinion formers, key decision-makers and other political, academic and civil society stakeholders.

TEAS is focused on achieving the following:

- The establishment of strong links between key Azerbaijani and European stakeholders, thereby helping Azerbaijan to integrate fully into the European family of nations.
- Strengthening ties between Azerbaijan and key economic, political and social structures across Europe.
- The promotion of Azerbaijan as a modern, secular, Western-facing country with tremendous economic opportunities and a strong cultural heritage.
- Creating a community spirit amongst expatriate Azerbaijanis in Europe.
- Increasing awareness of the ongoing Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the plight of the 875,000 refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

## Newsletter

TEAS is always bringing the latest news, views and interviews on all aspects of Azerbaijan, and is launching a biweekly free e-newsletter. To find out more, please sign up at [www.teas.eu](http://www.teas.eu).

## Forthcoming Azerbaijani event

**1–4 November**

### **Azerbaijan London Film Festival**

Shortwave Cinema, 10 Bermondsey Square, London, SE1 3UN; School for Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London WC1H 0XG and other venues.

Co-sponsored by TEAS, this landmark festival will focus on contemporary Azerbaijani narrative and documentary cinema, opening with the acclaimed *Sahe (The Precinct)* (Ilgar Safat, 2010). For the full programme and pricing details, please go to [www.aloff.org](http://www.aloff.org) or e-mail: [info@aloff.org](mailto:info@aloff.org).

An exhibition of paintings by Naile Zulfuqarova will take place alongside the festival at Azerbaijan House, 228 Kingsland Road, London, E2 8AX.

## Outreach and Engagement

The TEAS Facebook page is your chance to learn about the latest TEAS news, events, campaigns and other items of interest to the Azerbaijani community. Please 'like' the page at <http://bit.ly/TEASFB>

## Membership

TEAS offers a range of corporate and individual membership packages, providing such benefits as advertising, networking, travel discounts and assistance with visas. To find out more, e-mail: [membership@teas.eu](mailto:membership@teas.eu)

## Latest Members



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October 2012

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Conservative MPs Laura Sandys and Christopher Pincher emphasised the importance of the long-standing UK–Azerbaijani relationship

## British parliamentarians acknowledge the importance of Azerbaijan

Numerous peers, MPs and MEPs have used the receptions organised by TEAS at the three main party conferences to express their support for Azerbaijan, recognising its increased relevance to Europe.

The most popular event was at the Conservative conference, when over 200 supporters attended the *Baku to Birmingham* reception. Laura Sandys, MP for Thanet South, Parliamentary Private Secretary to Greg Barker, Minister for Energy and Climate Change; member of the Energy and Climate Change Select Committee; and a founding member of the Conservative Women's Muslim Group, commented: "Azerbaijan is an important partner, not just to the UK, but to the West as a whole. Azerbaijan and the Caspian basin will play a crucial role in ensuring energy security." She recognised that Azerbaijan is a friend to the West in a geopolitically challenging environment, and emphasised the importance of bilateral trade between Azerbaijan and the UK.

Christopher Pincher, MP for Tamworth; member of the Energy and Climate Change Select Committee; and Chair, Azerbaijan All-Party Parliamentary Group, continued: "Azerbaijan is vital to ensure European energy security, and construction of the Southern Corridor is necessary to diversify supply routes away from Russia. Senior cabinet members should visit Azerbaijan to demonstrate our high regard for relations with Baku. In particular, I believe that a visit to the country by William Hague, Foreign Secretary, would be very beneficial.

"We should also remember that Azerbaijan's success has occurred despite the forceful occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh and the seven surrounding regions by neighbouring Armenia. This has caused 875,000 citizens to become internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, and remains a major concern for the Azerbaijani people. It is necessary for swift, peaceful, resolution to be achieved through diplomatic means, and the UK should be more active in supporting the Azerbaijani position."

At the Liberal Democrat conference in Brighton, Lord German of Llanfrecfa, member of the Azerbaijan APPG, spoke of the country's

strategic location. He also outlined the country's enormous economic potential, due to its natural resources, and commented that the UK continues to contribute the greatest proportion of Foreign Domestic Investment (FDI) to the country. He also requested stronger support from the UK regarding resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Lord Wallace of Saltaire, Spokesman for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Ministry of Defence and Cabinet Office, stressed that Azerbaijan is an extremely important partner to the UK economically, politically and strategically, particularly regarding the transportation of supplies to British forces in Afghanistan. He also discussed the future role of the country as a secure energy source for Europe.

At the Labour Party reception, Gerry Sutcliffe MP, another Azerbaijan APPG member said: "I am delighted to be here as a friend of Azerbaijan. Labour supports Azerbaijan, and later this year we will visit the country to meet the trade unions. We need to unite with workers in the country, and give them a message of support."

Richard Howitt MEP, Labour Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs in the EU, stated: "We want Europe to engage as much as possible with Azerbaijan. We are aware of the ongoing Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and would like to see movement towards the swift and peaceful resolution of this. Azerbaijan's oil and gas resources are incredibly important for Europe with regard to the future of energy security."

## Switzerland allocates \$70m to Azerbaijan

The Swiss government has allocated grants totalling \$70m (£43.2m) to Azerbaijan, according to H.E. Sabine Ulmann Shaban, Swiss Ambassador to Azerbaijan. She spoke during the signing of an agreement regarding a technical assistance project, focused on improving the Azerbaijani capital market. Ambassador Shaban remarked: "Azerbaijan is a priority country for Switzerland, and my country has contributed towards the development of Azerbaijan's non-oil sector, supporting its macroeconomic stability and development of rural areas." She explained that Switzerland and Azerbaijan would continue their collaboration within the new strategy.

This capital market modernisation project will play a specific role in developing the non-oil sector of the economy. The Swiss government is investing in the Azerbaijani economy through the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation (SDC), both of which are represented in

Azerbaijan by the Swiss Co-operation Office for the South Caucasus.



The Flame Towers, illuminated by LEDs, dominate the new Baku cityscape

## Flame Towers profiled on CNN

Speaking on CNN's *Great Buildings* programme, US-born architect Barry Hughes, Vice-President, HOK Construction, has revealed that the recently-constructed Flame Towers in Baku is the favourite building he has designed, to date. He commented: "Building an 'icon' is one of the most intimidating briefs for an architect. It's probably dangerous to try to do something iconic. I feel guilty, because I get to take a bow for the 150 people who worked on this project." Hughes continued: "The shape of the towers was inspired by the city's history of Zoroastrian fire worship, and its ongoing connection with natural gas. The client absolutely latched onto the idea of the flame, and then it became an interesting conversation about how literal that would be."

The towers posed numerous challenges, as they had to be weighted in accordance with seismic specifications, and elements needed to be constructed without the use of cranes, due to Baku's harsh winds. The Flame Towers site is large and dense, comprising offices, a hotel and residential apartments, located above a shopping mall and a car park. He admitted: "Making all those spaces work in tandem was the biggest engineering challenge of all." To see the programme, go to <http://bit.ly/flametowers>.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Azerbaijan has trade balance surplus with US

The Azerbaijani State Customs Committee has revealed that Azerbaijani-US trade amounted to \$1.2bn (£741.3m) during the January-July period. During this time, Azerbaijan's exports to the US came to \$835.1m (£515.9m), whereas Azerbaijani imports from the US were \$342.7m (£211.7m), resulting in a trade surplus balance of \$492.4m (£304.1m). The US accounted for 5.9 per cent of Azerbaijani exports and 6.5 per cent of its imports over this period. During 2011, Azerbaijani-US trade came to \$2.4bn (£1.5bn).



Maxime Verhagen recognised the future importance of Azerbaijan to the EU

## Dutch–Azerbaijani relations reach a new level

In an interview with *AzerTAC*, Maxime Verhagen, Dutch Deputy Prime Minister, commented during a visit to Baku that: “Over the past 20 years, bilateral relations between the Netherlands and Azerbaijan have developed progressively and positively. We value the role of Azerbaijan in this region, in political terms, as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council; for energy security; and due to its growing economic potential. Our bilateral co-operation has broadened and deepened, and we share European values and commitments. My visit to Azerbaijan reflects the Netherlands’ commitment to assisting, both bilaterally and in the framework of EU co-operation.

“Over the last few years, trade turnover between our countries reached a constant level of around \$200m (£124.8m) per year. Last year, Dutch exports to Azerbaijan tripled, although Azerbaijani exports to the Netherlands mainly consist of oil and gas products and vary year on year. We acknowledge the contribution Azerbaijan can make to securing and diversifying the supply of energy to Europe, and the Netherlands would be happy to see Azerbaijan invest in a logistics hub to store and handle oil in our main port of Rotterdam.

“In the coming decades, Europe’s indigenous gas production will gradually diminish, due to gas reserve depletion. Unless Europe succeeds in reversing this trend and increasing gas production, it has to rely more on imported gas. Since unforeseen circumstances can always occur, one has to play it safe. That is where diversity of supply comes in, preventing interruption of energy to industrial and residential users, should these circumstances occur. That’s why the European Commission has made many efforts to facilitate the flow of gas from the Caspian into Europe. Our countries have much in common: we are both situated in a Delta area, and we are both gas producers and trading nations. In the context of our EU partnership, we attach high value to broad dialogue and co-operation, aimed at bringing Azerbaijan closer to European standards.

“Of course, we hope Azerbaijan will also make progress in the negotiations to become a member of the World Trade Organisation. The EU and Azerbaijan are also in the process of negotiating a visa facilitation agreement and, closely linked to that, a re-admittance agreement. The further strengthening of bilateral economic ties will be dependant on progress in all these broader policy areas.”

## Energy journalists convene in Baku

Over 150 leading journalists from across the world, specialising in energy issues, have gathered in Baku to attend the *Oil, Gas and Media Conference*. The event was organised by the International Press Institute (IPI), a Vienna-based global network for free media operating in over 120 countries, together with IPI’s Azerbaijani National Committee, the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijani Republic (SOCAR) and the Centre for Economic and Social Development (CESD).

The conference was the first of its kind to be organised by IPI, being aimed at journalists covering the oil and gas industries, business reporters, oil and gas industry executives, analysts, experts and politicians. Alison Bethel McKenzie, Executive Director, IPI, said that participants were invited to explore how public opinion, freedom of information and media relations “all intersect with the oil and gas industries.”

Natiq Aliyev, Minister of Industry and Energy, Azerbaijan, stressed the necessity for the media to undertake careful reporting of energy issues, commenting that: “The truth is that the oil and gas industry has helped build most of the economies of the world. Let us report accurately.”

## UK professor becomes special advisor

Professor Mike Hardy, Executive Director of the Institute of Community Cohesion (iCoCo), Coventry University, has been appointed as special advisor for intercultural dialogue by the Azerbaijani government. Following a declaration by Azerbaijani President Aliyev at the 65th Session of the UN General Assembly, the *World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue* took place in Baku in April 2011, being aimed at promoting various aspects of peaceful coexistence, mutual respect and understanding between all cultures of the world.

Professor Hardy will act as special adviser

to Dr Aboulfas Mursal Garayev, the Azerbaijani Minister of Culture and Tourism. He will focus on developing the concept and programme for the second Forum, to be held in Baku from 29 May–1 June 2013. More than 500 delegates from 102 countries, including representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the media, scholars and experts participated in the first forum. The 2013 forum will be organised in collaboration with UNESCO, the UN Alliance of Civilisations, Council of Europe, The Islamic Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (ISESCO), North-South Centre of the Council of Europe and the World Tourism Organisation.

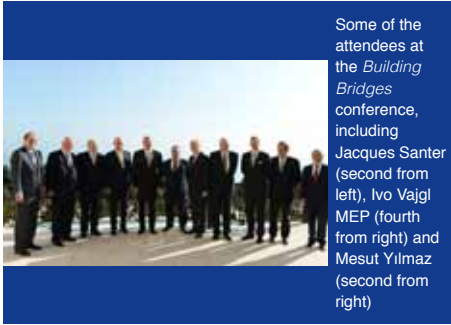
The Professor commented: “Azerbaijan is one of the unique places, where different cultures meet at the crossroads between East and West, North and South, and is a member of both Islamic and European organisations. The country has an opportunity to provide a genuine bridge. I am delighted that Coventry University will be able to participate and influence this global platform, helping to further increase its impact on this work regarding human security.”

Professor Hardy was awarded the OBE in 2001 for his work in the Middle East, and appointed a Companion of Honour of St Michael and St George (CMG) in the Queen’s Birthday Honours in June 2010 for his international work regarding intercultural dialogue.

## Call for applications for new British Council programme

The British Council has opened a call for entrants to undertake training on the course entitled *Development of International Offices in Azerbaijani Universities* from 24–28 September 2012 and 21–25 January 2013, within the framework of the British Council’s new *Internationalising Higher Education Programme* initiative. The training will be conducted at the Azerbaijan University of Languages.

An international expert from the UK will supply the training, and the organisers will pay delegates’ expenses. In Azerbaijan, the programme will focus on Global Partnerships within Higher Education, contributing towards the improvement of such elements as quality assurance, transnational education, entrepreneurship and enterprise, transferable skills, and competencies within education. The training will be organised in collaboration with the Azerbaijani Ministry of Education and reliable partner universities.



Some of the attendees at the *Building Bridges* conference, including Jacques Santer (second from left), Ivo Vajgl MEP (fourth from right) and Mesut Yilmaz (second from right)

## ‘Building Bridges’ conference includes Nagorno-Karabakh focus

During a meeting at the *Building Bridges* conference in Baku with Jacques Santer, former President, European Commission; Members of the European Parliament (MEPs); and other diplomats from across Europe, Azerbaijani President Aliyev confirmed Azerbaijan’s commitment towards forging stronger ties with the European Union (EU). He commented: “Our main focus should be concentrated on how to build bridges and increase mutual trust.”

Hosted by the Association for Civil Society Development in Azerbaijan (ACSDA) and the Institute for European Affairs (INEA), the conference was attended by more than 200 delegates. The objective was to discuss political, economic and cultural links between Azerbaijan and the EU. Elkhan Suleymanov, Head, Azerbaijani delegation to the EURONEST Parliamentary Assembly, commented: “Azerbaijan is committed to building stronger bridges with the EU, and is therefore engaged in close political dialogue, harmonisation of its legal system, and is co-operating with Europe in the economic, public and cultural spheres.” He also noted that Azerbaijan is playing an increasingly essential role in ensuring European energy security.

Suleymanov stressed that it was critical to find a lasting solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. He called for the international community to adopt a more objective and unbiased approach towards “one of the few nations with a predominantly Muslim population that is integrating with the EU.” Mesut Yilmaz, Former Turkish Prime Minister, urged his European colleagues to take firm action regarding the conflict. He stated: “The role of France within the OSCE Minsk Group is limited, and doesn’t reflect the EU’s stance. The EU is an international actor, and should act accordingly to solve ‘frozen’ conflicts.”

Jacques Santer praised Azerbaijan and emphasised that the country has already fulfilled all conditions required of a modern country integrating into the European space. Arjen Uijterlinde, Dutch Ambassador to

Azerbaijan, stated that the EU sees Azerbaijan as a reliable partner, and is interested in developing its relations in all areas, including trade, the economy and telecommunications. He continued: “Amsterdam supports the accession of Azerbaijan to the World Trade Organisation and the negotiations between Azerbaijan and the EU on visa facilitation.” Ivo Vajgl, Slovenian MEP, commented that Brussels’ position regarding Azerbaijan as “a strategic partner of the EU” is clear. He stated: “We want to re-establish the sovereignty of Azerbaijan across its entire territory and the right of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees to return to their native land.”



Swiss rail company BLS purchased the first in a fleet of Stadler double-decker trains in March 2012

## Swiss Stadler Rail offers services to Azerbaijan

The Swiss Stadler Rail company has submitted a proposal to Azerbaijan Railways regarding modernisation of its rail system. During a meeting, Arif Asgarov, Chairman, Azerbaijan Railways spoke of the works that have already been undertaken, and outlined the details of the *State Programme on Development of the Azerbaijani Railway Transport System 2010–14*. The head of the Swiss delegation, Peter Jenelten, Vice-President, Stadler Rail, explained that his company has factories in several countries, including Switzerland, Germany, and Poland. He continued: “At present, 13 countries operate Stadler Rail’s passenger trains, carriages, trucks and trams.” The delegations discussed the potential construction of two facilities for repairing rolling stock, and further meetings are planned for the future.

## Azerbaijani parliamentary delegation meets Albanian President

A parliamentary delegation, led by Ogtay Asadov, Speaker, Milli Majlis (Azerbaijani Parliament) has visited Albania, where it met Buyar Nishani, Albanian President, and Jozefina Topalli, Speaker, Albanian Parliament. President Nishani stressed the high level of bilateral political relations between the countries, underlined the importance of expanding economic co-operation, and invited Azerbaijani businessmen to his

country. Asadov emphasised the need to develop contract law to strengthen the collaboration.



Mud volcano eruptions are said to result in the discovery of oil fields

## World’s largest mud volcano blows its top

The National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan (AMEA) has been researching the causes behind the eruption of the Lökbatan volcano in the Garadagh district of Baku on 20 September. Adil Aliyev, Head, Mud Volcano Department, AMEA Institute of Geology, stated: “The eruption occurred early this morning, and lasted for 10–15 minutes. The fire brigade immediately extinguished a fire. The volcano is located far away from residential areas, so there were no casualties. The previous eruption took place in February 2010, although this was much stronger.”

Aliyev explained that the volcano is surrounded by oil fields, which are, fortunately, beyond the danger zone. He continued: “In 1933, after the eruption of the Lökbatan volcano during scientific examination, a previously unknown oil field was discovered. Following this, scientists developed the theory that the incidence of mud volcanoes determines the location of oil fields. This resulted in the discovery of numerous oil deposits.” Altogether, 350 of the 800 mud volcanoes in the world are located in Azerbaijan, giving it the highest percentage of the phenomena.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Azerbaijani company to establish free industrial zone in Georgia

SOCAR Georgia Investment is to establish a free industrial zone in Kulevi, Western Georgia, according to Iva Davitaia, Director, Strategic Development Agency, Georgia, during an interview on *Radio Kommersant*. He explained that the main purpose of the zone will be to create a climate that would attract investment and provide new career opportunities. The zone will cover 600,000m<sup>2</sup>, and it is expected that construction will be complete by the end of 2013.

## Eileen Hofer – an independent perspective on contemporary Baku

After her family fled Lebanon in the mid-1970s, Eileen Hofer was born in Zürich. Her mother is half Turkish and Lebanese, and this mixture of identities is present in much of her work. Eileen initially worked as a press officer for a film festival, and then began her journalistic career for a Swiss daily newspaper in 2005. Following this, she spent two years as chief editor of *Ego*, a Swiss magazine, before starting off her career as a self-taught film director.

Eileen's first short film, entitled *Roots* (2008), was screened in 70 festivals, including those at Locarno, Clermont-Ferrand, and Palm Springs, receiving more than 10 awards. The story concerns an unemployed Turkish man whose child's birthday coincides with the construction of a long-planned dam which will result in the submergence of his village. Her second short, entitled *The Mourning of the Merry Stork* (2009), which was screened in 40 festivals, including Rotterdam, won the Suissimage/SSA New Generation Prize for Best Short Film. This minimalist film tells the story of a Lebanese couple that, one night, flee political tensions in Beirut. They bring the bare essentials, as they are convinced that it will soon be possible to return. *Soap Opera in Wonderland* (2010) concerned a Portuguese immigrant in Switzerland who makes a living by dressing as a rabbit at children's parties and falls in love with a Filipino housemaid. However, *He Was a Giant With Brown Eyes* is Eileen's first full-length film, being a blend of fiction and documentary, premièred at the *Rotterdam International Film Festival* in January 2012.

Featuring a family of non-professional actors who are eventually revealed as the step-family of Eileen, the main protagonist of the film is Sabina Aghamaliyeva, a 17-year-old Azerbaijani girl who has grown up with her mother in Switzerland since the age of 12, following her parents' divorce. Her 19-year-old sister, Narmina, remained with their father in Baku. Five years later, the sisters are reunited when Sabina spends a summer holiday in Azerbaijan. She has an ulterior motive – she wants to move back with the father she loves so deeply. He also wishes to marry for the third time, and needs to break the news to his daughters. Whilst she is in Azerbaijan, Sabina takes a road trip into the countryside with her uncle. However, Narmina is left to lament her boyfriend, who has been drafted for military service. This is a very elegiac film, and TEAS spoke to Eileen at home in Geneva to find out more.



Eileen Hofer's international background inspired her new film, featuring her step-family

Photo: Annick Weiler

**In the film, Sabina is Azerbaijani, yet she has grown up in Switzerland. Was the main purpose of the film to give a sense of distanciation from her homeland?**

Sabina has spent five years living outside her own country in Switzerland. She knows the rules and culture of Azerbaijan, but she has now been immersed in another culture. Throughout, I was watching Sabina and her readjustment. I have roots in Turkish and Lebanese culture, yet I grew up in Switzerland. Whenever I return to Turkey or Lebanon, it always takes a few days to understand how the culture works. I have to adapt myself, and I knew she would have exactly the same experience. When I mentioned this, she assured me that this would not be the case. However, during the first two or three days, for example, she began to realise that certain items of clothing would be inappropriate as men would stare at her and she would begin to feel uncomfortable.

This period of readjustment became

particularly evident when she was dealing with her father or her grandparents, who have another culture. For example, they are shocked that she is always playing with her mobile phone whilst they are speaking. Despite the readjustment, she was pleased to rediscover the food, and became totally readjusted after a few days.

**Was her characterisation based on your own story and that of Sabina herself?**

I shot the film on a daily basis, and I was watching what was happening. Much of this made its way into the film. So, for example, when she meets her father for the first time, we were following her, and those elements have a documentary quality. In the evening, I was writing down my impressions of the day and the conversations that we would have the following day, such as the grandfather talking about the war and what Kerim (Narmina's boyfriend) would say about undertaking military service. During the



Sabina, the main character, reads her divorced parents' love letters from over 20 years earlier

night, I was working on the script, and the next morning I would indicate the kind of direction the conversation should follow. I would let the family open a door of conversation, and then ask if they would feel comfortable about discussing certain topics. Sometimes they would explain that these were not their particular emotions. On other occasions, they would agree that something was a good idea and the ideal starting point for dialogue. So I would provoke incidents or accidents in order to create a little drama behind the conversations. Otherwise, it would have been a pure documentary, possibly with no emotion.

Throughout, the film had to be shot very quickly, as the family were constantly under time constraints. We never had time to set up the shots perfectly, and sometime we were frustrated. Javier Gesto, the cinematographer, always wanted more time, but I had to point out that, if we set the lighting perfectly, all our actors would have disappeared. Even the sunsets and landscapes had to be shot swiftly, as I knew the light density would change. The final shot of the film had to be shot in two minutes, as the sun came down the mountain. I was shouting my directions to Sabina, and we then had to post-synchronise the sound to remove these.

#### **Were you discovering Azerbaijan for the first time?**

Yes, I was, and we spent exactly 18 days in the country, 16 of which were in Baku, and that is the reason why I wanted to go out from the city and the last ten minutes of the film are in the countryside. I had read about Guba, and was pleased to see that it was very green, representing an escape from Baku. The city indicates the people and the rules, and the countryside represents the freedom of your mind. I wanted to have this opportunity to run away with Sabina and let her open her mind in the shadow of the Caucasus Mountains, which resemble Switzerland. It also gave us chance to shoot this little road movie and discover the countryside of Azerbaijan.

#### **Was the section in Guba also aimed at showing the 'real' Azerbaijan, away from the Western-inflected modernity of Baku? For example, people dress in a more traditional way, farm animals roam the streets, and Sabina asks: "Are we in Dagestan or Chechnya?"**

Actually, that was my sentence. I was watching Sabina, gauging her reaction, and she was looking around and saying: "It's weird – where are we?" Sabina may have seen the regions of Azerbaijan before, but she would have been very young.



(from left) Julien Painot (composer), Eileen Hofer (director), Sabina Aghamaliyeva (actress) and Ladislav Agabekov (composer) at the film premiere at the Rotterdam International Film Festival

#### **Were you also seeking to demonstrate some of the challenges that Azerbaijan has experienced since independence? For example, her grandmother only speaks Russian, and not Azerbaijani, and recalls land and riches being stolen by the Soviets, yet she sings the Soviet anthem. Also, Sabina and her father visit Martyrs' Alley and the Eternal Flame.**

I read a great deal about this generation of old people from across the entire former Soviet Union. Many of these people are now very poor and fighting to survive. After the Soviet Union began to collapse in 1989, a young generation became rich, but the older people only had the Communist model and became left on the wayside. I wanted to have this discussion with the grandparents, to ask if they felt more secure now than in the Soviet days. For instance, Sabina's grandfather is more than 80 years old, but he is still working on a daily basis to earn around \$100 (£62) per week. If the Soviet régime had continued, he would have retired at the age of 60 years.

With regard to visiting Martyrs' Alley and the Eternal Flame, we had a conversation with Sabina's father. He was working very hard, and was not available to appear in much of the film. His only day off was Sunday, and I asked him about the one place he would like to take his daughter. He explained that these two monuments commemorated those who died in the struggle to regain independence and in the fight against the Armenians. He wanted his daughter to remember what happened at this time. I realised that her father remains totally in love with his country and is really, as a member of the navy, fighting for his homeland. He was content that Azerbaijan is now independent and no longer under Soviet domination.

However, it remains true that the family speaks the Russian language, as Sabina's father has been working in Kaliningrad and the girls spent their formative years there. The grandmother is from Ossetia, and speaks Russian, but the grandfather is Azerbaijani, so he speaks that language. It's a mixed salad, and this is mostly attributable to the impact of the Soviet Union.

When I first presented *He Was a Giant With Brown Eyes* in Rotterdam, a large Azerbaijani contingent from across the Netherlands were in attendance. They asked me to explain why Russian was selected as the language for the film, rather than Azerbaijani. I replied that it was not my decision, but the family naturally spoke that language. In Baku, it is very common for families to still communicate solely in Russian. However, in the regions, such as Guba, they spoke only Azerbaijani and did not understand Russian very well.

#### **Sabina's father was in the navy at the time of the independence struggle, and wrote love letters to her mother. These are read aloud by Sabina in the film. Were they created for dramatic effect?**

Not at all – they really existed. However, I could not read them myself, so I asked Sabina to find some letters that would be appropriate to reflect the situation of Kerim being drafted and the fact that they would only be able to communicate in writing. When we were discussing this aspect of the story with Sabina's mother in Switzerland, she explained that this separation had happened to her, lasting for four years, rather than the year-long duration of Kerim's military service.

#### **Kerim is being drafted into the army for his national service. By including this in the narrative, were you aiming to indicate that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict remains unresolved?**

This situation really happened – we had to undertake the filming in Azerbaijan earlier than planned because of his imminent departure. I wanted to ensure that this was included in my film, but the emphasis was on the separation from Narmina for a year. The humanitarian aspect was most important to me. We spent two or three days with them both, and then he had to enlist. I did not aim to talk about the conflict, and the background is never discussed. Sabina only asks her grandfather once: "Is it dangerous to be on the 'contact line'?" However, the main point was the separation, and the parallels between this situation and Sabina's parents more than 20 years earlier.



Away from the city, Sabina finds peace in Guba

**Did you also aim to demonstrate the disparity between the old and the new in Azerbaijan? For example, Narmina has a boyfriend, which is a modern, Western-styled relationship, and her father is marrying for the third time.**

Actually, Narmina's relationship with Kerim was unusual, even in Baku, and I realised I was amongst a very modern family. The parents are divorced, and Sabina is living in Switzerland. In *Roots*, my first film, there was also this contrast between modernism and tradition, and I like to explore this topic.

Another example is that Sabina has spoken to her stepmother for the first time by Skype, yet the father explains the traditions of marriage whilst cooking a kebab on the barbeque. Superficially, the trappings of modernism are present in Baku, yet tradition is always in the background. Most notably, when her father marries his third wife, they cover their heads and go to the Imam.

**How did you deal with filming in Russian, which is a language that you do not speak?**

All my previous films were also shot in languages that I do not speak. *Roots* was in Turkish, *The Mourning of the Merry Stork* was in Arabic, and *Soap Opera in Wonderland* was about a romance between a Portuguese man and a Filipino woman, where they both spoke their own languages. I believe that it is more natural for me to shoot in a language that I don't understand. Despite not comprehending the words, I can fully understand when a performance is faithful or not.

With *He Was a Giant with Brown Eyes*, the situation was different to my other films, as the film was not purely fiction, so I did not write a script. When the family was speaking together I was lost regarding the substance of the conversation. Throughout, I was either using Sabina or Narmina as my 'journalists'. I was telling them to ask their grandmother, for example, about certain topics. They would initiate the conversation on that subject. After a while, I would say 'cut', and request a translation. I would then

realise if something had been missed, and the girls would improvise on that topic. We had hired a translator, and at night I would receive the entire translation, and I would select which parts to retain in the film. I would also see where a topic had already been covered earlier in the shoot, and then could decide which version to use. Alternatively, I could see where we needed additional sentences that could be generated during conversations in the following scenes. It was important to achieve this – when we returned to Europe to edit the film, one subject was missing, but we were no longer in position to undertake further filming, and it had to be left out.

During the 18 days of filming, we lived with Sabina and Narmina, and we became very close. We worked for up to 15 hours a day, and they contributed many ideas. Eventually, they almost became like actresses. For example, the sequences in the bedroom with the two girls were rehearsed seven times, yet they remained natural and gave the impression of spontaneity.

**How did you raise finance?**

The concept of the film arose during my conversations with Sabina in April 2011. She decided to visit Baku at the end of June and we had to travel one week before originally scheduled as Kamil was to be drafted into the army. We had six weeks to organise everything. It was very difficult to raise funds in such a short time, but at the last minute I managed to obtain €25,000 (£20,050) from the City of Geneva. This covered the filming and some of the editing, which took place in Spain. The decision by the *Rotterdam International Film Festival* committee to include the film in its programme was the biggest news I could receive. However, I did not have sufficient funds to finish my film, as the final parts of post-production are the most expensive. I eventually received some additional funds from Swissfilms, a Swiss government-run foundation, and the Buta Arts Centre, a Moscow-based organisation that promotes Azerbaijani culture. I also raised money via Facebook, as Swissfilms only

provided a third of the requested budget. In my Facebook advertisement, I tried to point out that even low-budget films can eventually end up being shown in larger festivals, and sponsors could end up being listed as honorary producers in all related publicity.

**Where has the film been shown, to date?**

*He Was a Giant With Brown Eyes* was first shown at the *Rotterdam International Film Festival*. It was then shown in Nyon in Switzerland as part of a well-known documentary festival called *Visions du Réel* and at the *Seventh Festival International du Film Oriental de Genève*. Following this, it was shown in Portugal in the *Ninth Independent Film Festival Lisboa*. This was one of only eight films to be selected, of which mine was the only entry with documentary elements. The director of the festival told me that I had "invented a new language" by blending documentary and fictional elements in this way. The film was then shown in Brazil in the *9th Femina Festival Internacional de Cinema Feminino*, where it won the Best Direction award, and at the *Seoul International Youth Film Festival*.

It will be shown at the *Namur Film Festival* in Belgium at the end of September, then at the *9a Muestra de Mujeres en el cine y la Televisión*, Mexico; *Listapad Film Festival*, Minsk; and *ArtDocFest*, Moscow. A company normally handles distribution, yet I am doing this myself, which is challenge as I am now engaged on a new project. I attempted to interest cinemas in Geneva in the film, but they regarded it as uncommercial as it does not have any big stars, and was filmed in Azerbaijan in the Russian language. I then called the owner of an art cinema in Geneva and he screened it, and this resulted in it being shown in five cities across Switzerland. This attracted the regional and national Swiss press, and I was interviewed on the main Swiss television channel. They seemed interested in the fact that I made and distributed the film singlehandedly.

**What is your latest project?**

Sabina's father indirectly suggested my latest film, as he was posted in Cuba with the Soviet navy. I had always wanted to visit Cuba, and spent the whole of July there. I am shooting my second feature on the island, and the film will be fictional, centring on classical dance. For the first time, I will also be making a film in a language in which I am fluent.

For more information on Eileen Hofer's work, go to [www.eileenhofer.ch](http://www.eileenhofer.ch)





Hamida Melikova poses with *Mood Squares*, one of her recent artworks

## Hamida Melikova – Inspired by Nature

Based in Moscow, Azerbaijani artist Hamida Melikova is renowned for her semi-abstract works. Trained as a doctor, she began to practice art at an early age, but it only became her main occupation after the age of 30. Following her graduation from Azerbaijan Medical University as a dermatological specialist, her skills had begun to mature. Most of her works are designed for exhibition in apartments, country houses or offices. All works demonstrate how Hamida delicately manipulates various techniques in an innovative manner to create her artworks. Hamida applies watercolour, acrylic and oil paints to boards and wood bark, and particularly likes to achieve relief textures. For example, Hamida has recently used tree bark to represent animals from the African savanna or Amazonian selva.

Hamida's first personal exhibition took place in 2008 at the Maiden Tower Art Gallery, prior to which her artworks were solely shown to friends and family. Hamida prefers to sell her works to buyers that are known to her, so she knows that her 'children' will be in good hands. These paintings are currently displayed in private collections around the world, including an ornamental mosaic, based on Azerbaijani symbols, that now decorates the US headquarters of the Russian Orthodox Church in Washington D.C. Her works are regularly exhibited in the Park Café, Baku, and have also been shown in major galleries in Moscow. TEAS spoke to Hamida to find out more:

### When did you decide to devote yourself to art?

I come from a dynasty of dermatological specialists, and initially followed my parents into this field. Art was always part of my nature, and is important to my entire family. In 2005, my husband, Elchin Azizov, and I decided to undertake a radical transformation in our lives. He is a renowned KVN (satirical competition) team leader, director, actor and now a Bolshoi opera soloist. At that time, we both were both aged 30 years, with a stable family and good standard of living, but we suddenly realised that our current situation was not our true destiny.

Elchin went to Salzburg to study operatic singing, and I decided to give up medicine and specialise in fine arts.

### Which artistic schools and artists have had the greatest impact on you?

I like to think that I follow an independent path, where I am constantly experimenting, so each new artistic series differs to that which came before. I enjoy experimenting with techniques, otherwise art becomes boring for me. I love painting, and our many overseas trips have given me much inspiration. I have never wanted to imitate another artist or be confined in any artistic tradition.

### Your first exhibition was partially devoted to animals, represented using natural materials. Why was this?

This happened purely by accident – I encountered a piece of bark, which itself prompted a narrative in my consciousness and resulted in the *Animals* series. Following this, a friend enabled me to visit a timber yard, where I consciously selected some materials. I enjoy experimenting with different surfaces.

### Did you adopt this path due to the fashion for natural materials?

This was not the reason for my selection – I work with different textures, and undertake experiments using sand and soil, creating a range of mixes. I like to harness relief effects, which are achieved when my mixes solidify. I use the technology of material ageing and, on one occasion, the result was so convincing that

the customs authorities tried to impound my paintings as they did not believe I had obtained the correct antiques export license. I was forced to prove that the work was only recently completed!

### You often incorporate Azerbaijani symbols in your work. Are you aiming to gain popularity by appealing to national traditions?

I like to include such symbols and to study their background. The symbols contain a great deal of coded information, although viewers who do not hold the necessary referential knowledge can feel their energy. I try to treat symbols in a careful and sympathetic manner. I apply elements from folk traditions carefully, and aim to avoid turning them into kitsch. I do not use Azerbaijani symbols for fashionable reasons – I really know and love them.

### Why do birds feature in your latest works?

These birds are in the British tradition of ornithological illustration. The drawings are undertaken on tree bark, and are treated with a special solution.

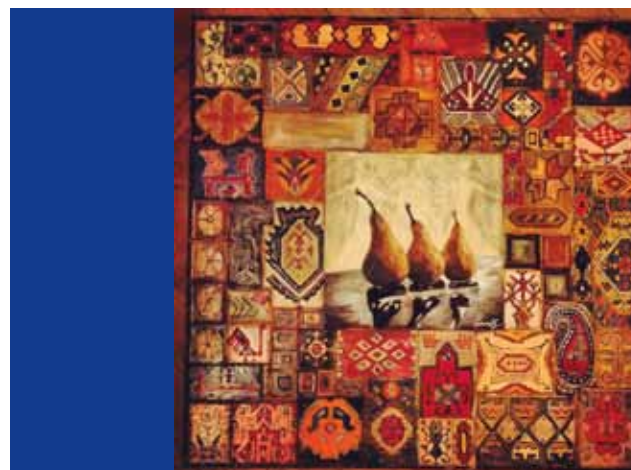
### Do you participate in collective projects or prefer to work alone?

I go with the flow, and do not refuse any offer or proposal outright. I recently participated in the *Maiden Tower International Art Festival*, where I painted a model of the tower. The festival focused on the representation of pomegranates, and the organisers were so appreciative that my model was used in the background of many event photographs, and my designs were projected on the actual tower at night, together with designs by other artists.

### What is the best accolade you have received as an artist?

The best compliment I have ever received is when someone said: "It is pleasant and enjoyable to live with your works." It is very important that my husband and son support me. My artistic career forms part of a family project, and I sign my works with GamEl, which is a compound name derived from Gama-Elchin, representing the creative freedom achieved by my husband and myself.

To contact Hamida Melikova, e-mail: [hamida\\_malikova@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:hamida_malikova@yahoo.co.uk)



Carpet Fantasy is replete with Azerbaijani national symbols.



The controversial new airport remains unused

## Airport on occupied territories – operations imminent?

In an interview with the Armenpress news agency, Nelly Charchinyan, Spokesperson, Armenian Civil Aviation Department, has stated that the reconstructed airport located in Khojaly, near Khankendi (Stepanakert), the main city in Nagorno-Karabakh, officially opened on 1 October. She stated that the first flights from the airport in 20 years would take place in the “coming days”, the flight destination being Yerevan.

The prospect of the opening remains extremely provocative, and the Azerbaijani State Civil Aviation Administration said that the planned Yerevan–Khankendi flights would constitute an “invasion” of Azerbaijan’s internationally-recognised airspace. Elman Abdullayev, Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry spokesman, explained: “Khojaly Airport has a great symbolic meaning for the Azerbaijani people.

The airport was occupied on 25 February 1992 and, immediately after that, Armenian armed forces destroyed the town of Khojaly and massacred its residents. The commissioning of the airport by the Armenian side is disrespectful to the memory of those Azerbaijanis killed there, and has outraged the internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the area.” The airport opening has already been delayed since the end of 2011.

A spokesman for the Azerbaijani State Civil Aviation Administration commented to the APA News Agency: “According to international norms, Azerbaijan has sovereign rights to its airspace. Those who enter that airspace without permission shall be considered to have breached the air borders.” According to Armenian reports, two aircraft were purchased for the airport earlier this year.

## Russian military base transfers to Yerevan

Ziyafet Asgarov, First Deputy Speaker, Milli Majlis (Azerbaijani Parliament), commented during the opening meeting of the parliamentary autumn session that Azerbaijan is concerned that Russia has revealed plans to transfer its existing military bases in Armenia to Yerevan. He continued: “Several meetings have been held with the relevant agencies, which stated that the issue is under consideration. An official response will be given after these conversations are completed.”

Sabir Rustamkhanli MP went further: “No-one can guarantee that Russian armaments will not be supplied from Armenia to occupied Nagorno-Karabakh, as Armenians will work at these bases.” He stressed the need for the UN to appeal to Russia regarding the prospective move.

## OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs meet Foreign Ministers in New York

The representatives of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs – Ambassadors Robert Bradtke (US), Igor Popov (Russia) and Jacques Fauré (France), together with Ambassador Andrzej Kasprzyk, Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-office – met Edward Nalbandian, Armenian Foreign Minister, in New York on 26 September and Elmar Mammadyarov, his Azerbaijani counterpart, the following day.

During the meetings with the Ministers, the Co-Chairs discussed recent regional developments and urged the parties to return to the Nagorno-Karabakh negotiations. They

also expressed their concern over the lack of tangible progress in recent months. Both Foreign Ministers reiterated their support for peaceful resolution, and their willingness to continue dialogue.

## PACE President receives Azerbaijani and Armenian delegation heads

Jean-Claude Mignon, President, Parliamentary Assembly to the Council of Europe (PACE), organised a meeting attended by Samad Seyidov, Head, Azerbaijani Delegation to PACE; David Harutunyan, his Armenian counterpart; and Jordi Chukla, Spanish MP and Chairman, PACE Subcommittee on Nagorno-Karabakh. No details of the discussions were revealed to the media, which was organised by Mignon following Seyidov’s proposal to hold discussions at PACE on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### UK Minister for Europe expresses need for conflict resolution

Speaking in Yerevan during a joint press conference with Edward Nalbandian, Armenian Foreign Minister, David Lidington, UK Minister for Europe, commented: “The UK wants the peace process within the OSCE Minsk Group to restore peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The fact that Azerbaijan has significant British commercial interests means that the UK has an obvious wish to promote peaceful reconciliation and stability in the South Caucasus.”

#### Davutoglu addresses UN on Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution

Speaking at the 67th session of the UN General Assembly in New York, Ahmet Davutoglu, Turkish Foreign Minister, reiterated his country’s position regarding the restoration of Azerbaijani territory. He explained: “The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has not been resolved for two decades. We believe that a solution should be found within the framework of Azerbaijani territorial integrity.”

#### Youth resolution adopted in Kiev

Youth organisation representatives from 26 countries have adopted a resolution regarding settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict within Azerbaijani territory. The move took place in Kiev during the 4th International Forum on UN Youth Policy. The event brought together about 200 representatives from 40 countries, including diplomats and political experts. The report also specifies that the approximately 875,000 IDPs and refugees should be permitted to return home.



Elmar Mammadyarov expressed his hope for peaceful coexistence in Nagorno-Karabakh

## Mammadyarov: Azerbaijanis and Armenians will live to Azerbaijan admits that “shoulder-to-shoulder” status quo is fruitless

During his address to the 67th session of the UN General Assembly in New York, Elmar Mammadyarov, Azerbaijani Foreign Minister, remained positive about the prospects for peace in Nagorno-Karabakh. He stated: “The Azerbaijani and Armenian communities in the Nagorno-Karabakh region will one day live shoulder-to-shoulder. We sincerely believe there is no alternative to peace, stability, and mutually beneficial regional co-operation. Azerbaijan is the most interested party in a swiftly negotiated settlement of the dispute.”

During his statement, Mammadyarov addressed his country's role as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council (UNSC) during 2012–13. He explained how Azerbaijan, which served as President of the 15-member body in May, organised a meeting under the Arria Formula, a very informal consultation process that enables UNSC members to hear perspectives in a confidential, informal setting. He explained that this had “encouraged a frank exchange of views... on the role of mediation, judicial settlement and justice in promoting durable, international, law-based peace and reconciliation.”

In particular, Mammadyarov expressed Azerbaijan's concerns regarding the Middle-East peace process, which he said has “been at a standstill,” calling on the parties to create the necessary conditions conducive to the resumption of negotiations.

### Aliyev meets Hollande

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev met French President François Hollande on 18 September at the Élysée Palace during his state visit to Paris, during which they discussed the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The move was significant, as the visit took place soon after President Hollande

took up his office. The final months of the Sarkozy presidency had seen a marked deterioration in Franco-Azerbaijani relations, when the French Senate attempted to ratify a bill criminalising denial of the so-called ‘Armenian Genocide’, which was eventually overturned by the Constitutional Council. Bilateral relations between the countries are currently flourishing, particularly regarding Total's explorations of newly-discovered gas deposits at the Absheron field.

During a meeting with Colonel-General Ramil Usubov, Azerbaijani Interior Minister, H.E. Pascal Meunier, the recently-appointed French Ambassador to Azerbaijan, has requested further impetus towards resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. He explained: “Progress in Nagorno-Karabakh settlement depends on the political will of the sides. We can assist with this, but without the political determination of both countries, it will be impossible to find a solution.” Ambassador Meunier recalled that conflict resolution was central to the recent discussions in Paris between Azerbaijani President Aliyev and French President Hollande.

Meunier continued: “We cannot say that France remains inactive regarding the establishment of a solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, as the latest meeting between [the mediating] OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs and Foreign Ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia took place in Paris.”

## \$431.5bn – the cost of Armenian damage

The Azerbaijani Ministry of Economic Development has assessed the extent of the damage caused to Nagorno-Karabakh and the seven surrounding regions by the conflict and ongoing Armenian occupation. Natig Hasanov, Deputy Head, Intergovernmental Economic Co-operation Dept., explained that the cost of the damage equates to \$431.5bn (£269.1bn). He justified this estimate by saying: “This index was based on research from various ministries, including the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, State Committee on Work with Refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) and other state organisations, together with the Ministry of Economic Development.”

## NEWS FROM BRUSSELS

TEAS Belgium was recently informed via the Cypriot and pan-European media that Eleni Theocharous MEP (EPP, Cyprus) had visited Armenia to observe the so-called ‘presidential elections’ in Nagorno-Karabakh on 19 July.

The Nagorno-Karabakh region is internationally-recognised Azerbaijani territory, and four UNSC resolutions have been passed, requesting that Armenia removes its military forces from the region and the seven surrounding regions. This violation of international law presents a real obstacle to the achievement of a sustainable peace for one of the European Union's (EU) most important partners.

Roman Huna, Head, TEAS Belgium commented: “The EU has unequivocally condemned all previous ‘elections’ in the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh region. The visit by Eleni Theocharous MEP clearly undermines Azerbaijani sovereignty and territorial integrity. It risks impacting the ongoing political efforts by the EU and others to achieve peaceful settlement of this conflict in Europe's backyard.”

During the course of 2012, the European Parliament (EP) has been paying increased attention to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. However, this action by Eleni Theocharous MEP could be perceived as disrespecting the national sovereignty of an important EU partner. Furthermore, her action is clearly inconsistent with the EP's view expressed in the April 2012 report regarding the partnership and co-operation agreement between the EU and Azerbaijan. For this reason, TEAS drafted a letter to the main political group leaders in the EP.

Roman Huna continued: “We believe that peaceful settlement is the only guarantee for the economic and social stability of the South Caucasus, and remain committed to constructive co-operation with European institutions to achieve this goal.”

TEAS remains committed to these aims, and recently gained increased support for its views with a recent statement by several leading European politicians and stakeholders. In September, a proposed event in support of the Armenian perspective, to be held in Brussels, was cancelled at the last minute.

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The new agitation leaching plant is designed to enhance the efficiency of precious metals recovery from the Gedabek mine

## \$10.5m loan agreed to develop Gedabek mine

Anglo Asian Mining, the AIM-listed gold producer, has announced that it has agreed a further \$10.5m (£6.6m) loan from the International Bank of Azerbaijan (IBA). This will fund the initial construction of an agitation leaching plant, designed to enhance gold recovery at the gold, silver and copper mine in Gedabek. It will be commissioned during the first half of 2013.

Construction of the new agitation plant has already begun, and will require an estimated capital expenditure of \$52m (£32.5m). It is designed to treat 100 tonnes of ore per hour, initially improving gold recovery from oxide and sulphide materials to 85 and 69 per cent respectively. In May, the IBA provided a \$7.5m (£4.7m) loan to the company, of which \$5.9m (£3.7m) has been drawn, to date.

The IBA has also indicated that, subject to internal consideration and approval, it will provide up to an additional \$42m (£26.2m) to Anglo Asian Mining to construct the new agitation plant. This would bring total IBA funding to \$60m (£37.5m). Under the terms of the agreement, an all-inclusive annual interest rate of 12 per cent will apply on funds drawn, payable on a quarterly basis. The loan will be drawn down in tranches up to a maximum of \$1.5m (£936,326).

## Azerbaijani – US connections are energised

Vitaliy Baylarbayov, Deputy Vice-President, State Oil Company of the Azerbaijani Republic (SOCAR), has revealed that ExxonMobil has entered into formative discussions with SOCAR regarding current and future opportunities in the Caspian, particularly in relation to the Shah Deniz II full-field development. According to a report in *Forbes*, participation in the Shah Deniz Consortium (SDC) would also give ExxonMobil a strategic stake in Azerbaijani production, enabling it to benefit from the new finds at the Absheron, Shafag-Asiman, Umid, and Azeri-Chirag-Guneshli (ACG) deepwater developments. The possible move

would result in a change in SDC composition, and come in the wake of ExxonMobil's recent explorations in the autonomous Kurdish region of Iraq and in Turkmenistan, where it has opened an office.

Meanwhile, Baylarbayov revealed that SOCAR is now interested in entering the US energy market. The comments were made during his speech at the *Oil, Gas and Media Conference* in Baku. Baylarbayov said that the company had opened a representative office in Washington D.C., and another will be opened in Houston in the near future. He explained: "We are interested in the US market, and we will let you know when these projects begin."

## Azerbaijan's first satellite ready for lift-off in early 2013

Azercosmos has sent one of its chief technicians to Dulles, Virginia, USA, to the Orbital Sciences Corporation factory, to witness the manufacturing of Azerspace-1, the first Azerbaijani telecommunications satellite. Nigar Madatli, Spokesperson, Azercosmos, commented that assembly was occurring according to schedule. He explained: "Currently, one Azercosmos engineer and two engineers from Telesat, the Canadian consulting company, are undertaking technical control over satellite production at the Orbital Sciences Corporation production facility."

According to Madatli, Azerspace-1 will be put into orbit from Kourou, French Guiana, in early 2013. The satellite will provide digital broadcasting, internet facilities, data transmission, very small aperture terminal (VSAT) multi-service networks, and government communications. Finance for the satellite was supplied by a \$116.6m (£72.8m) credit agreement with French bank BNP Paribas, and an \$80–90m (£50–56m) agreement with COFACE, the French export credit agency. It is anticipated that Azerspace-1 will recoup its investment within five to seven years of operation, and any profits will be reinvested in Azerbaijan's technological development.

## Azerbaijan sees non-oil sector investments rise

According to the Azerbaijani State Statistics Committee, around AZN8.4bn (£6.7bn) was invested in the development of the Azerbaijani economic and social sectors during January–August 2012, equating to a year-on-year increase of 28.4 per cent. Investments in the

construction sector increased by 28.3 per cent during this period, and reached AZN5bn (£4bn). AZN3.8bn (£3bn) was invested in production facilities, while AZN4.6bn (£3.7bn) was spent on services.

Altogether, around 27.1 per cent of all investments, amounting to AZN2.3bn (£1.8bn), was directed towards development of the oil sector, whereas 72.9 per cent was for the non-oil sector. Investments in the oil sector increased by 23.6 per cent year-on-year, with non-oil investments improving by 30.3 per cent.

## SOCAR to decide on TANAP stakes

SOCAR and its partners in the planned Trans-Anatolian Pipeline (TANAP) will decide their stakes in the project during the remainder of this year, establishing the hierarchy of companies involved in constructing the link. Vitaliy Baylarbayov, Deputy Vice-President, SOCAR, explained: "It will definitely be signed before the end of this year." SOCAR currently has an 80 per cent share in the project, with the remaining 20 per cent being held by BOTAS and energy producer Turkiye Petrolleri. It has revealed plans to bring BP, Statoil, and Total into the venture, thereby reducing its stake.

In June, Azerbaijan and Turkey signed an agreement to construct the \$7bn (£4.4bn) TANAP project, which will transport natural gas from the Shah Deniz II field in the Caspian Sea to Turkey's European border. SOCAR has revealed that construction will begin at the end of 2013 and be completed in 2017. At the Turkish border, TANAP will connect with either the proposed Nabucco West pipeline or the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP), which will take the gas into Europe. It is expected that the BP-led SDC will choose between the two links in May.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Umid gas field starts production

SOCAR has begun to extract natural gas from the Umid field in the Caspian Sea, according to Rovnag Abdullayev, President, SOCAR, speaking in Baku. He revealed that daily production from the deposit, located 40km from the Azerbaijani coast, amounts to 1 million m<sup>3</sup> of gas and 200 tonnes of condensate (light oil). Azerbaijan announced the discoveries at Umid in November 2010, and the field has since been estimated to contain 200bn m<sup>3</sup> of gas and 40m tonnes of condensate. It is one of the main Caspian fields that could be used to supply energy to Europe, facilitating the diversification of supplies.



CAD visualisation of the brand identity for SOCAR Energy Switzerland

## SOCAR opens first Swiss filling station

All 160 former Esso filling stations in Switzerland will operate under the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijani Republic (SOCAR) brand by mid-2013, the first of which was opened in Zürich, according to SOCAR Energy Switzerland. SOCAR is also the first new entrant to the Swiss filling station sector for more than 20 years.

The takeover comes in the wake of the acquisition of ExxonMobil's Esso Schweiz assets by SOCAR for \$330m (£206m). SOCAR has also taken over the Wangen bei Olten gas depot, aviation fuel supply businesses at the Geneva and Zürich airports, and the supply company that controls joint ventures managing terminals and pipelines.

## New law on capital market development on the horizon

A report in *Business News Europe* has revealed that Azerbaijan is working on a new law regarding the country's capital market in order to create a modern financial system capable of supporting the country's economic development. This follows last year's launch of a decade-long programme for the securities market. Representatives of the Azerbaijani government and stock exchange officials are currently working alongside a range of international organisations, including the EU and World Bank, which has provided a \$12m (£7.5m) loan to support the project.

Dan Feder, Partner and Assurance Leader, PwC Azerbaijan, explained that it is important that the law provides strengthened protection of investor rights. He commented: "This is a very crucial pillar to facilitate the successful modernisation of capital markets and the overall economy of the country. It also enables the establishment of corporate entities."

Elchin Ibadov, Assurance Senior Manager, PwC Azerbaijan, continued: "Setting the ground rules for market participants gradually leads to the next step, which is the strengthening of the regulatory environment

to enforce reforms. There are currently several bodies participating in the capital market." At present, the Azerbaijani capital market features a low level of capitalisation and turnover. Confidence in the market is also relatively low, and an increase in financial literacy – amongst both the population and financial institutions – is essential. Ibadov continued: "The future of the capital market in Azerbaijan will depend heavily on the success of the co-ordinated efforts by the Azerbaijani government with global institutions on one hand, and local businesses and consumers on the other."



MEDEF members met Azerbaijani President Aliyev and Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov

## French businessmen briefed on Azerbaijan

Azerbaijani President Aliyev met businessmen from the Mouvement des Entreprises de France (MEDEF) during his state visit to Paris. The French delegation, comprising nearly 60 businessmen, was headed by Jean Burrell, Chairman, MEDEF International, the largest employers' union in France. During the meeting, President Aliyev noted the rapid development of economic co-operation between Azerbaijan and France, particularly regarding the operations of the energy companies Total and GDF Suez. He commented: "Azerbaijan is now working with its partners to ensure European energy security. Diversifying energy routes is a key priority, and our interests coincide with those of our European partners on this issue. Azerbaijan is a reliable partner for Europe."

He also acknowledged that French companies, particularly Total, are involved in construction of the Trans-Anatolian Gas Pipeline (TANAP). The President also spoke about Azerbaijan's economic priorities, the current and further role of the country in the region, and relations in non-oil sectors, such as transportation, healthcare, tourism and information and communications technology (ICT).

## SOFAZ assets reach \$33bn

During his speech at the *Oil, Gas and Media Conference*, Shahmar Movsumov, Executive Director, State Oil Fund of

Azerbaijan (SOFAZ), revealed that his organisation currently holds assets worth \$33bn (£20.6bn). He recalled: "When it was established in 1999, SOFAZ assets hit \$271m (£169.3m), but the current figure testifies to tremendous economic growth since then." He explained that SOFAZ was established with three main objectives – to maintain economic stability by accumulating the funds obtained from hydrocarbons, gradually infusing these into the economy to reduce the impact of economic downturns; preserve the funds obtained from hydrocarbons for future generations; and to provide for the current generation by investing in infrastructure, education and social projects.

SOFAZ' assets increased by 30.9 per cent year-on-year, as of 1 January 2012, amounting to \$29.8bn (£18.6bn). Its funds developed by 9.6 per cent and hit \$32.7bn (£20.4bn) during the first six months of 2012. According to the forecasts, SOFAZ' assets will reach \$34bn (£21.2bn) by the end of 2012.

## A Pizza You in Baku

The US-headquartered Papa John's International, a pizza company with more than 4,000 restaurants spread across 33 countries, is to open its first restaurant in Azerbaijan, located in Baku. The franchise, owned by Kamran Aliyev and Murad Melikov of PJA, will offer dine-in, takeaway and delivery options. PJA aims to grow the Azerbaijani market by opening several additional Papa John's restaurants during the next few years.

Tom Sterrett, Senior Vice-President, Papa John's International explained: "For more than 28 years, Papa John's has grown steadily by delivering on its brand promise of 'Better Ingredients. Better Pizza.' Azerbaijanis can expect to enjoy the same great taste and high-quality ingredients in every pizza, currently enjoyed by so many loyal customers around the world every day."

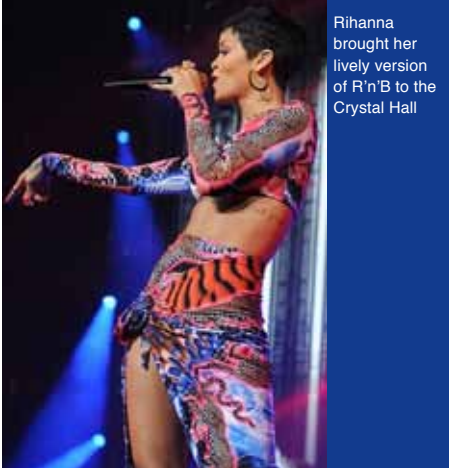
## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Isayev leaves AIC

After three years in the role, Afgan Isayev has resigned as Executive Director of the Azerbaijan Investment Company (AIC). A source commented: "A new director has not yet been appointed, and AIC is currently being managed by the acting director." The AIC, a state-owned equity fund, was established in 2006 to encourage investment in important non-oil projects in Azerbaijan. It has been involved in such landmark projects as the new Garadagh Cement plant (operated by Holcim) and construction of the Baku Shipyard (operated by SOCAR and Keppel).



J-Lo gave an energetic and spectacular show



Rihanna brought her lively version of R'n'B to the Crystal Hall

## J-Lo, Rihanna and Shakira brighten Baku

On 23 September, Jennifer Lopez took to the stage of the Baku Crystal Hall, constructed to host the *Eurovision Song Contest*, before an audience of 25,000 spectators. The evening came a day after Lopez had performed a short set before the opening game of the Women's U-17 World Cup at the Tofiq Bahramov Stadium. Initially, the Azerbaijani singer Emin and J-Lo welcomed attendees to the gala evening. Emin's performance came on the heels of a US promotional tour, timed to support his *Baby, Get Higher* single and CD album entitled *After the Thunder*.

Emin opened the gala evening with the songs *Just For One Night* and *Never Enough*, the latter having been performed during the Eurovision final whilst the scoring process took place. During the 45-minute show, featuring professional dancers and the Philharmonic String Orchestra, he performed his hits and songs from *After the Thunder*. The greatest ovation for the performer came after his performance of *Blue Eternity*, performed alongside three-dimensional projected footage of the late Muslim Magomayev, who composed the song and inspired Emin early in his career.

Following this, J-Lo and 60 members of her entourage took the stage for an outstanding performance that included pyrotechnics,

changes of scenery and costumes, a laser show, dances and even a boxing ring.

On 6 October, 24-year-old R'n'B queen Rihanna took the stage of the Crystal Hall to perform a lively set of her biggest hits, including *Only Girl (In The World)*, and closing with *We Found Love*. Her performance coincided with the Quarter-Finals of the football tournament.

Despite her well-publicised pregnancy, Colombian pop sensation Shakira closed the U-17 Women's World Cup competition with a concert on 13 October, followed by a full performance at Baku Crystal Hall a day later.

## FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup held in Baku

Joseph Blatter, President, FIFA attended the opening of the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup in Baku on 22 September. During a press conference, he commented: "Azerbaijan is traditionally a melting pot of civilisations and cultures, and a place where the East meets the West. Organising a Women's World Cup in this country is a symbol for the region and for the world that football is open to all cultures and all civilisations. Football is for all."

He also visited a FIFA coaching course for women's football in Azerbaijan, organised to coincide with the competition. Blatter greeted the participants from 16 European countries, and underlined the importance of appointing more female coaches. He also attended the first three matches played in Baku at the Tofiq Bahramov Stadium, attended by several thousand spectators. Prior to the match, there was a mini-concert by Jennifer Lopez, who entertained the audience with a selection of her hits, including *On The Floor*.

The football competition was eventually won by the French team on 13 October, winning on penalties after a 1–1 draw with North Korea.

## Azerbaijani culture in the heart of Paris

Whilst in Paris, President Aliyev opened the Azerbaijani Cultural Centre, located near the Eiffel Tower. Housed in a historic building constructed in 1904, covering 3000m<sup>2</sup>, the centre is aimed at promoting awareness of all aspects of Azerbaijani history. It houses such artefacts as archaeological discoveries, ancient coins, weapons, copperware and miniature artworks. Particular emphasis is placed on the history of Azerbaijani carpets, including the background to the carpet weaving schools.

The Centre contains miniature art, together with examples of folk art, and national costume, and the library contains French translations of Azerbaijani literature. The building also houses a contemporary art gallery, and the mugham hall, a performance space where ancient musical instruments are also displayed. Cookery classes focusing on Azerbaijani cuisine will also be organised. The Centre was created with the support of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation and the Azerbaijani Embassy to France.

## Azerbaijani artefacts in new €100m Louvre gallery

The new Islamic Art Gallery in the Louvre Museum, covering over 2800m<sup>2</sup>, constructed at a cost of €100m (£80.6m), has been opened during a ceremony attended by Azerbaijani President Aliyev, First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva and French President François Hollande. Constructed in the Cour Visconti, the architects for the new gallery, two-thirds of which are underground, were Rudy Ricciotti and Mario Bellini. The new gallery houses nearly more than 10,000 works representing various cultures spanning Spain to South-East Asia, dating from 7th–19th centuries. These include including glasswork, ceramics, Ottoman art and one of the world's most important collections of carpets.

Addressing the event, Henri Loyrette, Director, Louvre Museum, explained that France attached great importance to the preservation of all cultures, including Islamic art, and sought to promote intercultural dialogue. French President François Hollande expressed his pride about the establishment of the new gallery, and thanked Azerbaijan and the other patrons, who had made this possible. He commented: "They are friends of France, and I hope this goodwill will continue in the future." To find out more, go to <http://bit.ly/islamicart>.



Ayyan demonstrated her formidable technique in this blend of Garayev and Bach

## Garayev's 24 Préludes for Piano premiered in the UK

Pianist Ayyan Salahova, a student at the Royal Academy of Music, London, has given the UK première of the *24 Préludes for Piano* by leading Azerbaijani composer Gara Garayev (1918–82) in a concert at Duke's Hall, the Academy's main concert space, to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the composer's passing. Composed between 1951–63, the pieces are divided into four books, each containing six préludes. In an inspired piece of programming, Ayyan prefaced each book with one of Bach's Préludes and Fugues from the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, and this juxtaposition demonstrated how Garayev's work increasingly reflected the influence of Bach in his later books.

The influence of microtones from Azerbaijani mugham were particularly evident in the first book, where most of the themes were dramatic and full of folk dance melodies, although lyricism was evident in the slower préludes. This became more apparent in the second book, particularly in *Prélude No. 7 in A Major*, a dramatic mugham, and *Prélude No. 12 in B Minor*, which is based on the basso-ostinato principle and incorporates Bachian influences.

In the third book, a constructive ostinato gave rise to a passacaglia form, incorporating mugham harmonies against a strict basso-ostinato background. Bach's influence was particularly evident in *Prélude No. 17 in A Flat Major*, which contained many heroic themes, also combining mugham and Bachian improvisation.

The final book was even more lyrical, with Bachian intonation, and some préludes featuring polyphony, the ostinato principle and passacaglia passages. In addition to the mugham-inspired elements, each major key was prepared by its minor subdominant to give an eastern flavour. The concert attracted considerable applause, and Ayyan interpreted the work of Garayev in an effective and technically adept manner. To hear Garayev's *Prélude No. 23 in F Major*, played by Rena Rzayeva, go to <http://bit.ly/Garayev>.

## The RPO on Amirov

London's concertgoers had a rare treat on 25 September when the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra gave a concert that included the *Azerbaijan Capriccio* (1961) and *Piano Concerto After Arabian Themes* (1957) by Fikret Amirov (1922–84). Given at Cadogan Hall, London, the orchestra was under the baton of Dmitry Yablonsky, and the concerto featured Farhad Badalbeyli, Director, Baku Music Academy and renowned pianist and composer. Each year, these two musicians direct the annual *Gabala International Music Festival*, at which the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra was resident this year for the second occasion.

Both works incorporated Amirov's concept of Symphonic Mugham. Amirov was a renowned orchestrator and this was evident in the *Azerbaijan Capriccio*, which contains some strident passages for the brass and is deeply rooted in folk music, juxtaposing a masculine theme for double-bass against the high register of the woodwinds and strings.

The *Piano Concerto after Arabian Themes* was co-composed with Elmira Nasirova, the Azerbaijani pianist. It was inspired by Amirov's trip to several Arab countries, where he recognised the similarities between Azerbaijani music and the indigenous melodies and rhythms that he heard and recorded. The piece featured Arabic folk music, combined with Azerbaijani melodies, although it was composed within the European framework of the concerto. Throughout, the soloist adopts the role of the mugham singer, and the piece makes considerable demands on the pianist's technical ability. Following rapturous applause, Farhad performed his rhapsodic composition entitled *The Sea*, as an encore. To hear *Azerbaijan Capriccio*, performed by the Bilkent Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Rauf Abdullayev, go to <http://bit.ly/azerbaijancapriccio>.

A new film entitled *In the Mountains of Gabala*, focusing on the annual music festival, which attracts 20,000 musiclovers each year, preceded the concert. This contained interviews with some of the leading soloists from the 2012 festival, such as pianist Boris Berezovsky, baritone Sergei Leiferkus and violinist, conductor and composer Yuri Bashmet. It then followed the festival directors

around Baku, including visits to a synagogue, Orthodox church and mosque. The film outlined the production methods used at the new Beltmann piano factory, which is located in Gabala.

## Yablonsky's cello transcription of Rzayev premiered in London

Now aged 82, Azer Rzayev is probably best known as a leading musical educator in Azerbaijan, where his positions have included Head of Chamber Music and Head of Strings at Baku Music Academy for many years. He was also Director of the Azerbaijan State Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet from 1972–87. In 1991, Rzayev was awarded the title of Honoured Artist of the Azerbaijani Republic.

Written in the 1960s, Rzayev's *Violin Sonata* ranks amongst his foremost works, and Dmitry Yablonsky premiered his own cello transcription at Cadogan Hall as part of a programme to celebrate his own birthday. The piece undeniably reflected the influence of Moscow, particularly in the piano part, which was redolent of early Prokofiev. However, elements of mugham were omnipresent, with the cello taking the role of the mugham singer. In particular, the *Adagio* was very melodious, featuring the tonalities of the east. The piece concluded with the dramatic *Allegro*, which contained a piano part reminiscent of the work of Vagif Mustafazadeh and ostinato phrases on the cello.

## Christie's go to Baku

Christie's has organised its first exhibition in Baku, flying in experts, together with works of art and a group of dealers and collectors. The auction house brought a small taster of its forthcoming Dubai, London and New York sales, ranging from contemporary Iranian artist Hadieh Shafie's 'scroll painting' *11580 Pages* (2012), estimated at \$10,000–\$15,000 (£6,253–9,379), to Picasso's painting *Femme au chien* (1962), at \$5–7m (£3.1–4.4m). The opening event was attended by Viscount Linley, Chairman, Christie's, during which he commented: "We will be back again, but bigger and better."

Alongside the Christie's exhibits, there was an exhibition of Azerbaijani contemporary art, including sculptures made from brooms by Ali Hasanov, to hyper-real paintings of vegetables and bottles by Farid Rasulov. H.E. Peter Bateman, UK Ambassador to the UK, commented: "The country was isolated for so long under the Soviet Union, but now has clear aspirations to enjoy the good things of life, including western art and culture."

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