

Azerbaijan National Day Special

Economic diversity a priority for region's energy leader

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May 28 is our Independence Day, and this year we are celebrating the 32nd anniversary of the restoration of our independence.

Today, under President Ilham Aliyev's leadership, Azerbaijan stands as a modern, independent state that takes pride in its rich history and centuries-old traditions of a multi-ethnic and multireligious society while looking toward the future with ambitious aspirations. Boasting the largest economy in the South Caucasus region and producing around 75% of the region's gross domestic product, Azerbaijan continues to make substantial contributions to regional economic, energy and transport cooperation, as well as to international peace, security and intercultural dialogue worldwide.

In recent years, following the restoration of independence, Azerbaijan has progressed in political, economic and social spheres, becoming a factor of stability and peace in the region. The country's international prestige has increased significantly, and today Azerbaijan is one of the world's most competitive states, implementing extensive energy and transportation projects alongside its international partners.

This year coincides with the centennial anniversary of the birth of the esteemed national leader of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliyev. Aliyev played an instrumental role in securing the country's independence and profoundly influenced its modern history. Under his visionary leadership, Azerbaijan emerged as a thriving and prosperous nation. His astute leadership guided Azerbaijan through tumultuous times and secured its independence. His



foresight and determination transformed the nation into a regional power, boasting a robust economy and a stable political environment. Under the sagacious guidance of both national leader Aliyev and the president, the unity between the people and their leaders, as well as the pursuit of targeted policies, has enabled Azerbaijan to surmount numerous challenges, including global economic crises and regional conflicts.

It is obvious that Azerbaijan is the primary player in the region's energy sector. The Azerbaijani leadership's oil strategy has ensured the involvement of foreign investors in the development of the country's oil fields and the diversification of crude oil and natural gas transportation routes. Azerbaijan's activity in the energy sector has transformed the country into a regional energy hub. The nation delivers its oil and natural gas to international markets through significant energy projects, such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and Southern Gas Corridor, contributing to Europe's energy security.

Azerbaijan plans to double its gas supply to the European Union market by 2027,

and this year the target is to deliver 12 billion cubic meters to Europe. Azerbaijani gas is already exported to Georgia, Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, Italy and Romania, and the plan is to start gas supplies to Hungary and Slovakia by the end of this year. The country is also in the process of negotiations with Albania to build a local gas distribution system.

Our president underlined that natural gas is not the only energy product that Azerbaijan exports to Europe. The country has been a reliable partner and important crude oil supplier for over 20 years. Petrochemicals and electricity are also part of Azerbaijan's exports. Azerbaijan is also working to transform into a producer and exporter of renewable energy. As our president emphasized, Azerbaijan is redrawing the energy map of Eurasia and continuing its active energy diplomacy and implementation of large projects, starting with oil, gas and now electricity supply and green energy.

Simultaneously, diversification of its economy, particularly in nonoil fields, remains one of the primary strategies of our economic policy. Azerbaijan continues



Left: Lake Goygol is known for its clear water. Right: Baku sits alongside the Caspian Sea.

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to promote economic diversification from hydrocarbons, paying particular attention to agriculture, logistics, tourism and information and communication technologies.

Azerbaijan has also launched a series of projects to develop trade and transit corridors, aiming to transform the Port of Alat (Baku International Sea Port) and the adjacent free trade zone into reliable regional logistics hubs. The Middle Corridor, a critical East-West link, is gaining prominence as a sustainable "green" route, attracting many countries. The Baku International Sea Trade Port plays a central role in its development. The Zangazur Corridor will create economic advantages for regional countries and integrate with existing transport corridors. Azerbaijan looks forward to Japan's interest in the Middle Corridor's potential,

which also garners strong EU interest.

On this momentous day, it is essential to highlight the exemplary bilateral relations across all spheres that bind us with Japan. It is also remarkable that Japan was among the first countries to recognize Azerbaijan's independence in 1991. Last year, we celebrated the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Azerbaijan and Japan. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1992, we have successfully elevated these relations, grounded in shared values.

Our countries have forged strong political ties and cooperated in various fields, including the energy sector, with Japanese companies actively participating in significant projects. This collaboration has led to robust economic ties and availability of Azerbaijani products in Japanese markets.

The Azerbaijani government has prioritized implementing Japanese technologies and fostering economic cooperation. Azerbaijan and Japan share a deep bond in culture and common values, evident in cultural events, educational programs and people-to-people exchanges. We anticipate increased cultural and educational exchanges to strengthen our bond and foster appreciation for each other's heritage.

As we mark Azerbaijani independence milestones, we commit to deepening our enduring friendship. Through shared values, mutual respect, and dedication to progress, Azerbaijan and Japan will continue to thrive and set an example for the world. Together, we will seize emerging opportunities for a brighter future filled with peace, stability and prosperity.



This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.

The Heydar Aliyev Center contains a 1,000-seat auditorium, temporary exhibition spaces, conference center, workshops and a museum. Left: The Maiden Tower has been a landmark in Baku's old town since the 12th century. EMBASSY OF AZERBAIJAN

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to the People of the Republic of Azerbaijan
on the Occasion of Their National Day

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