
ILHAM ALIYEV: AZERBAIJAN HAS HAD UNIQUE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SINCE 2003

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Since 2003 until today, Azerbaijan has had a period of economic development which has no analogues, said President Ilham Aliyev addressing an official reception dedicated to the 25th anniversary of restoration of Azerbaijan's independence.

Noting that Azerbaijan's economy has tripled, he said that no other economy has tripled in such a short time.

Industrial development has also tripled. We have put an end to poverty. The poverty level, which was standing at approximately 50 percent, has dropped to 5 percent. A very serious fight is underway against unemployment. The unemployment is at a very low level, he said.

President Aliyev said Azerbaijan also started the development of its regions, adding that more than 1.3 million new jobs have been created as a result of implementation of state programs.

Azerbaijan's regions have revived, the cities have improved and modern infrastructure projects have been implemented, he said.

We turned from a country importing electricity and gas into their exporter, added the president.

Azerbaijan has paid and is paying great attention to settlement of social issues. Salaries and pensions have been increased by several times over the last 13 years, he said.

Social infrastructure projects are underway, more than 3,000 schools and 600 medical centers have been built, more than 40 Olympic centers have been constructed in the regions, said the president, adding that all this are the achievements of the recent years.

We are moving towards technological development. Today, Azerbaijan is one of the few members of the space club. We have two satellites and the third satellite will be put into operation in the near future, said President Aliyev.

The president noted that Azerbaijan has turned into a very important country in resolving the regional cooperation issues.

The major energy projects implemented at our initiative, have gained a larger scope in recent years. These are already intercontinental energy projects, he added.

I would like to especially mention the Southern Gas Corridor. I should note that this corridor is being created on the basis of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline, which were commissioned in 2006 and 2007, said the president, adding that the Southern Gas Corridor wouldnt have been created without those pipelines.

He pointed out that today, the Southern Gas Corridor, which is one of the worlds biggest energy projects, is being implemented successfully.

We are getting closer to the final stage in implementation of the Shah Deniz 2 project, President Aliyev said, adding that 83 percent of the project has already been implemented.

TANAP project has been implemented by around 40 percent. We are successfully implementing this giant energy project. It will bring us additional great economic dividends in the future, said the president.

By using reliable routes, we deliver our rich gas reserves to the worlds largest market – Europe – which is one of the closest markets for us. Our energy policy is highly appreciated by the world. We have created an international cooperation format and are expanding it, President Aliyev added.

The president also said the Southern Gas Corridor is a historic project.

It will define our successful future development, he added.

Ilham Aliyev further said Azerbaijan is taking very serious steps with regard to the development of other sectors of its economy.

Recently the development of industry and agriculture has been on the rise in Azerbaijan. Despite the continuing economic crisis in the world, we have taken very serious steps in this direction. I am sure that in the coming years the development of the non-oil sector will proceed at a higher pace, he said.

The president added that about 70 percent of Azerbaijan's economy is formed in the non-oil sector.

We are now seriously engaged in diversification of exports. We have to bring the dependence on oil and gas to the lowest level, said Ilham Aliyev.

He added that Azerbaijan is taking serious measures for the governance reforms and fighting the unpleasant cases.

Corruption and bribery are the main calamities hindering our successful development, he said, adding that the institutional measures taken in this regard are yielding excellent results.

He also said Azerbaijan is already presenting and even exporting its intellectual product to the world.

ASAN xidmet is our product. This service has already received 12 million appeals, four million people are using these opportunities and now other countries too are learning this experience. We have to present our diversified export opportunities to the world markets in the future. The export of the intellectual products is also of special significance, he said.

President Aliyev added that Azerbaijan is today known all over the world as a very reliable partner.

All the projects we participate in are intended for cooperation. We think, and as the life shows we think rightfully, that cooperation between countries can remove some problems, he said.

Our energy policy is of good will. We have never used it for any other purpose, Ilham Aliyev added. All other regional initiatives, including the ones in the transportation, are intended for cooperation.

He reminded that Azerbaijan is today playing an active role in creation of the East-West corridor.

The Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway will be commissioned in the months to come. Thus, in order to provide ourselves with good opportunities, we are linking Europe and Asia, the president said. This corridor will give us great economic profits. The volume of the cargos to go through this corridor will reach tens of millions of tons.

Ilham Aliyev said Azerbaijan is also creating the North-South corridor.

We again made an initiative, we again presented a format of regional cooperation, and it has already been created. It will allow us transport additionally tens of millions of tons of cargos, he said. This exactly is the reduction of dependence on the oil and development of the non-oil sector.

President Aliyev added that Azerbaijan, using its geographical position, puts forward these projects and implements them.

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