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**ILHAM ALIYEV: "AZERBAIJAN HAS NEVER BEEN AS STRONG IN HISTORY AS IT IS NOW"**

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Next month, Azerbaijan will host IV Islamic Solidarity Games. Holding these Games in Azerbaijan is a very significant event in the life of our country, said Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev at the opening ceremony of the Journey from the Caspian of Baku 2017 Islamic Solidarity Games, APA reports.

The Head of State said that in a month more than 3 thousand sportsmen representing 57 countries will compete in Azerbaijan: We are ready to receive all the guests, we are looking forward to them. As I already mentioned, the sportsmen of 57 countries will take part in the Games, which is a record in the history of the Games. The role of volunteers is of special importance in the Games. I am glad that more than 8 thousand volunteers will take part in these Games. It is impossible to conduct these Games without them.

President Ilham Aliyev reminded that Azerbaijan, which has an ancient history, lives as an independent state for only 25 years: Last year we celebrated the 25th anniversary of the restoration of independence. These were the years of development, creation. I think that Azerbaijan in history has never been as strong as it is now. Azerbaijan enjoys great prestige in the international arena. Several years ago, with the support and voices of 155 countries around the world, we became a member of the highest international body of the planet - the UN Security Council. This is a manifestation of the attitude, respect for us in the international arena.

The head of state said that this year was declared the Year of Islamic Solidarity in Azerbaijan: This is an important initiative put forward by us for closer unity of all Muslim countries. Today all

Muslim countries should show unity and solidarity." I am confident that next month's Games will be a great sporting holiday, as well as a reflection of our friendship.

The President noted that Azerbaijan has achieved great success in sports: "Our modern sports infrastructure allows us to hold any prestigious international competition. The most modern sports facilities were put into operation in Baku. At the first European Games held in Baku two years ago, Azerbaijani athletes won 56 medals and were awarded the second place in the team events. The results of last year's Olympic Games in Rio showed that this victory was not by chance. At the Olympic Games in Rio, Azerbaijan won 18 medals, and we took the 14th place on a world by the number of medals. In Rio, Azerbaijan took the first place among the Muslim countries. "

"Water is life. Nature and man can not live without water. Azerbaijan is a country that has a picturesque nature. Beautiful lakes, rivers, springs, waterfalls, the beautiful Caspian Sea is our natural treasure. Today, from the shores of the Caspian Sea, a great journey begins in various directions of our country. Water, in fact, is a symbol, and the symbol of the Games is water. I consider that this choice is commendable. Let our way be pure, and intentions - clean, like water. "

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Kaynak/Source: