

Azerbaijanis are grateful for founder's pursuit of independence

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On Oct. 18, Azerbaijan celebrates the restoration of its independence. This year, the celebration was preceded on May 10 by the 100th anniversary of the birth of Heydar Aliyev, founder of the independent state of Azerbaijan and an outstanding politician and statesman.

Aliyev was a powerful personality who successfully took his people out of the complex historical and political trials of the time and led them to independence through consistent struggle. Modern Azerbaijan, confidently advancing on a trajectory of continuous progress, stands as a

testament to Aliyev's enduring vision.

In the 1990s, Azerbaijan, having regained its independence due to the dictates of time, faced the peril of vanishing from the global political map and losing its statehood due to regional conflicts, external pressure and internal strife. At a pivotal juncture in 1993, Aliyev, having returned to power by heeding popular demand at a difficult time when Azerbaijan's fate was being decided, demonstrated unparalleled dedication to safeguard his homeland. Aliyev rescued Azerbaijan and the Azerbaijani people from the precipice of public and political fragmentation and anarchy, prevented the deep decline observed in all areas, rejuvenated the nation, rebuilt it and freed it from

various plots, thus paving the way for the sustainable development of the state.

Since 1993, thanks to Aliyev's relentless efforts, all prevailing challenges have been successfully addressed. Stability was restored, propelling Azerbaijan into a phase of robust development. The years of Aliyev's leadership in Azerbaijan are a fateful stage when the nation took advantage of a rare historic opportunity and made its independence eternal and irreversible at the cost of great suffering.

Aliyev's instrumental role in fortifying the country's independence left an indelible mark on its contemporary history. Under his visionary helm, Azerbaijan emerged as a thriving and prosperous nation. Aliyev's astute leadership guided Azerbaijan through tumultuous times and secured its independence. His strategic foresight and determination transformed the nation into a regional power, boasting a robust economy and a stable political environment.

Endowed with profound knowledge, Aliyev adeptly addressed the pressing issues of the Azerbaijani public, not just during the independence era, but also throughout his tenure, with insightful and courageous decisions. As a result of the successful implementation of Aliyev's national oil strategy, the people of Azerbaijan have become the full owners of their natural resources and acquired these resources in a short period of time, providing a strong impetus to the development of the country. The adoption of the inaugural Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the initiation of sweeping reforms across domains, the establishment of a democratic, rule-of-law state, and the

creation of a regular army stand as monumental contributions from Aliyev to the Azerbaijani people.

Today, Azerbaijan is moving and developing along the path laid down by Aliyev. His forward-thinking approach has also sculpted Azerbaijan into a beacon of intercultural and interfaith harmony and acceptance. This distinctive stance has not only distinguished Azerbaijan in the Muslim world as a unique country, but also fostered its close ties with the global community. Consequently, Azerbaijan is successfully cooperating with all international institutions and organizations.

Standing alongside the era's most influential politicians, Aliyev played a pivotal role in shaping modern Azerbaijan and in championing the rich cultural values of its people, ensuring the nation's esteemed place within the system of international relations. The resolution of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict based on the norms and principles of international law was the main task laid out by the great leader. The state of Azerbaijan, the masterpiece of the great leader, proved its ability to protect its sovereignty and independence with victory in the 44-day Patriotic War.

Aliyev, who left an indelible mark in the chronicle of the statehood and was proud of being an Azerbaijani throughout his life, remains a source of national pride, and is recognized as a symbol of Azerbaijan all over the world. "I have always been proud and I am proud today that I am an Azerbaijani," he said.

Overcoming many internal and external challenges, the great leader launched an



Heydar Aliyev is revered by Azerbaijanis as the founder of the independent state of Azerbaijan.
AZERBAIJAN EMBASSY

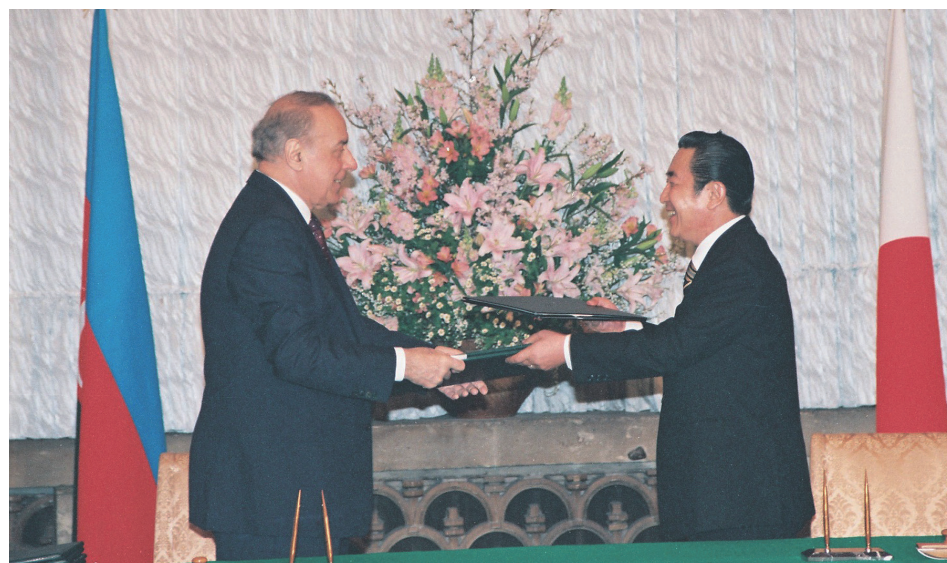
era of transformation for Azerbaijan from a war-torn country to one of the most rapidly developing and modernizing countries. With his astute leadership, he captured our imagination and led the entire nation toward a common goal of prosperity, peace and harmony.

Owing to Aliyev's bold vision and risk-taking, Azerbaijan now stands as a beacon of robust, enduring and sustainable values.

Azerbaijan, over three decades, has come a long way to become a fully free and independent country with great economic

potential. People live in an atmosphere of security in Azerbaijan. Tranquility, security and public and political order are protected, while there is every freedom. There are no political or economic restrictions. The positions of our country in the region are quite strong.

The invaluable legacy bequeathed by this luminary of independent Azerbaijan to current and future generations, coupled with his rich and multifaceted heritage, constitutes the cherished national treasure of the Azerbaijani people.



President Heydar Aliyev meets with then-Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto during his visit to Japan in February 1998. AZERBAIJAN EMBASSY