

INTERVIEW

HE Mehriban Aliyeva

Foundation for Success

Mehriban Aliyeva, First Lady of Azerbaijan, on the 10th anniversary of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation.

After the founder of the Azerbaijani state, national leader Heydar Aliyev, passed away in December 2003, various initiatives were put forward to establish a special public organization with a view to preserving his rich legacy, passing it down to future generations, and continuing his noble deeds. Taking into account social demand, the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, a nongovernment organization, was founded in May 2004. The major mission of the Foundation is both to popularize and advocate the life and activities of Heydar Aliyev, and also to support socio-economic and humanitarian development within the country and abroad. Committed to these principles since its establishment, the Foundation has implemented educational, healthcare, cultural, sport, scientific and technological, environmental, social, and other projects. The Foundation has achieved positive results in both Azerbaijan and abroad through its programs, projects, and charity activities. The Foundation initiated the creation of centers provided with state-of-the-art equipment, and the necessary literature for popularizing the history and rich culture of Azerbaijan and national leader Heydar Aliyev's life and activities. The centers do not function simply as museums, they also help young people and teenagers acquire diverse skills and knowledge. Computer, carpet weaving, chess, fine and applied arts, sculpture, and other courses are taught in these centers.

The Heydar Aliyev Foundation, which pursues the provision of equal opportuni-



ties in education, as well as the integration of the country into the world educational system, has implemented a number of programs and projects on this front. Among them are the "Development of Orphanages and Boarding Schools," "New Schools for a New Azerbaijan," and the "Support for Education" projects. Supported by civil society and the private sector, these projects and programs involved the construction and overhauling of dozens of children's facilities, and over 400 schools. The Foundation's initiatives enjoy strong government support also, with a total of 2,700 schools built or reconstructed in the country over the past decade. The "Development of Pre-School Educational Facilities" project is the latest in a line of new initiatives on this front. Made public this year, the project provides for the execution of complex measures in order to fully meet the demand for kindergartens in Baku.



BIOGRAPHY

Mehriban Aliyeva entered the Azerbaijan State Medical University after finishing secondary education in 1982, and graduated from the First Moscow State Medical Institute with an honours diploma in 1988. In 1995, she established the Azerbaijani Culture Friends Foundation, which she currently heads. In 2002, she was elected President of the Gymnastics Federation, and thanks to her growing prestige in the international arena, Azerbaijan was awarded the right to hold the Rhythmic Gymnastics World Cup in 2003 and 2004, as well as the World Championships in 2005. In 2004, Mehriban Aliyeva was awarded the title of Goodwill Ambassador of UNESCO and in 2006, Goodwill Ambassador of ISESCO. Mehriban Aliyeva is president of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation. Mehriban Aliyeva is President of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation. She is married, with two daughters and a son, and three grandsons.

1 Mehriban Aliyeva, First Lady of Azerbaijan

The Heydar Aliyev Foundation's activities in the field of culture cover a few major areas: preserving national and moral values and the country's cultural legacy, restoring historic monuments in the country and in other parts of the world, building new cultural facilities, and introducing Azerbaijani culture to the global community. Successful projects include the opening of the International Mugham Center designed to develop and promote traditional Azerbaijani music, which was inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, and the establishment of the Museum of Modern Art, the Museum of Azerbaijan Carpets and Applied Art, and the Qala Archaeological and Ethnographic Museum Complex. Annual international music competitions are considered stand out as important cultural dates in Azerbaijan and across the world. High-profile events like the International Mstislav Rostropovich Festival, the International "World of Mugham" Festival, the Gabala International Music Festival, and the International Ashyg Music Festival contribute to fostering the development of performing arts and expanding cultural relations.

The Heydar Aliyev Foundation places special emphasis on the mutual enrichment of various cultures and civilizations, the expansion of dialogue among nations, and the preservation of the traditions of tolerance, and to this end is implementing the "Azerbaijan Home to Tolerance" project. Under the project, the Foundation is reconstructing religious monuments and temples and arranging relevant exhibitions.

The Heydar Aliyev Foundation is also actively contributing to preserving the health of the population of Azerbaijan. One of the key tasks the Foundation has set for itself is helping children and teenagers in orphanages and boarding schools, as well as the children of martyrs, refugees, IDPs, poor families, and children suffering from various diseases. In partnership with international organizations and the world's leading healthcare companies, the Foundation implemented initiatives which include the "Best Care for Children with Diabetes" and the "For Life without Thalassaemia" projects, and has completely repaired, remodeled, and rebuilt medical facilities. A number of hospitals, polyclinics, diagnostics centers, and other medical facilities have been built, repaired, or remodeled in Azerbaijan since the establishment of the Foundation.

Charity is one of the key priorities in the activities of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation. It carried out charity campaigns aimed at promoting the integration of

children deprived of parental and family care into society, and ensuring the effective organization of leisure activities. As part of these campaigns, the Foundation provides a broad range of assistance and sends gifts to orphanages and boarding schools, while also organizing concerts and entertainment.

The Foundation arranges annual New Year and Novruz celebrations for children who have distinguished themselves in education and those who have been brought up in orphanages and boarding schools. It also assists children from refugee and IDP families, as well as orphans and those deprived of parental care, and sends holiday gifts to such institutions operating in Azerbaijan and also abroad.

The Heydar Aliyev Foundation organizes foreign visits for these groups of children and also provides opportunities for children from other countries to visit Azerbaijan and familiarize themselves with our country's history and rich culture. Initiated and supported by the Foundation, Azerbaijani schoolchildren have visited Germany, Belgium, France, Georgia, the Netherlands, and Romania, while schoolchildren from the US, Georgia, Romania, and Russia were given a chance to spend time in Azerbaijan.

The Heydar Aliyev Foundation is an organization which operates at an international level. It has offices in the US, Romania, Russia, and Turkey. The Foundation maintains close cooperation with the UN Development Program, UNESCO, ISESCO, and other international organizations, and is carrying out important programs and projects in foreign countries. Its activities abroad focus around three priorities: promoting Azerbaijan, including raising the international community's awareness of the truth about the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, restoring and preserving the historical and cultural legacy related to Azerbaijan and its citizens, and fostering humanitarian and social development.

In foreign countries, the Foundation presents Azerbaijan through the organization of culture days, exhibitions, as well as events to mark historic occasions and pay tribute to prominent figures in science and culture. Cultural events held by the Foundation abroad include the "Azerbaijan: To the World of Tales on Flying Carpets" exhibition, celebrating the 20th anniversary of restoration of national independence by the Republic of Azerbaijan, marking the 870th anniversary of the great Azerbaijani poet Nizami Ganjavi, which visited several cities in Europe including London, Paris, Berlin, Moscow, Strasbourg, and Rome.

The Foundation, which places a special

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emphasis on making the truth about the Armenia Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict known to the world community, has been carrying out commemorative campaigns about Khojaly in prominent cities across the world since 2007. These campaigns feature the presentation of the "Khojaly Genocide" film, photos documenting atrocities committed by Armenians in Khojaly, articles on the Khojaly tragedy issued by leading foreign editions, the "Truth about Garabagh" series, and the "War Against Azerbaijan: Targeting Cultural Heritage" book. In February of 2012, the Heydar Aliyev Foundation initiated the erection of a memorial commemorating the victims of the Srebrenica genocide in Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the Khojaly genocide in Nagorno-Karabakh.

As in Azerbaijan, the Heydar Aliyev Foundation's projects in education, healthcare, culture, and other fields are a success abroad too. For example, several schools were remodeled and completely repaired in Georgia, Egypt, Romania, Russia, Pakistan, and the Netherlands under the "Support to Education" project. The construction of a school for girls in Pakistan is one of the major success stories. A devastating earthquake completely destroyed a girls' school in Rara, in the Pakistani city of Muzaffarabad, in 2005. In response, within a short period of time, the Heydar Aliyev Foundation had built a new 650-seat school there. Projects implemented by the Foundation in the sphere of public



health include the vaccination of tens of thousands of people from low-income families against the Hepatitis B virus in Pakistan, the provision of ambulances and blood banks for people suffering from thalassemia, hemophilia, and other blood diseases, and carrying out eye surgeries.

In 2013, the Foundation also provided financial assistance to schools in the State of Maryland, US, for the purchase of interactive whiteboards, and special equipment for children with disabilities, and in 2014 embarked on a new project in partnership with the US Urban Alliance organization. This was set up to provide assistance to graduates through training sessions and

practical education. Another project by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation in the field of healthcare was initiated jointly with “Save a Child’s Heart” in Washington, and the Foundation also provided support to the reconstruction of the Center for Blind and Visually-impaired Children and Youth in Sarajevo.

The Foundation’s cultural projects in foreign countries demonstrate its respect for cultural diversity and universal values, contributing to a strengthening of dialogue between cultures and civilizations. This is evidenced in the restoration of monuments in the park of the Palace of Versailles, the Louvre, and the Berlin City Palace, which

was destroyed in WWII, as well as medieval manuscripts in the Vatican Archives and the Roman Catacombs in the Vatican, and the repair of the Philosophers’ Room in the Rome Capitoline Museum.

The Heydar Aliyev Foundation’s work abroad also includes programs and campaigns in the field of healthcare. In April 2008, people with heart diseases received treatment in cooperation with the Ioan Popa Foundation. In December of 2010, a fully equipped Sobol ambulance car was donated to the Center of Paediatric Oncology and Haematology at the Regional Clinic Hospital No. 1 in Yekaterinburg.

In December 2012, the Heydar Aliyev Foundation organized, in partnership with the Polish Embassy in Baku, a visit of physicians from Anna Dymna’s Mimo Wszystko Foundation to Azerbaijan. As part of the visit, the physicians conducted training and courses at the Association of People with Down Syndrome. In March 2013, the Foundation organized a visit of Azerbaijani children with Down syndrome and their parents to Krakow.

The Heydar Aliyev Foundation’s activities abroad include other social projects, too. It financially assisted Haiti in dealing with the consequences of an earthquake, and Romania in tackling the consequences of a natural disaster. In September 2011, the Foundation provided financial assistance to the French Association for the Victims of Terrorism to help it organize the 7th International Congress for the Victims of Terrorism in Paris.

Social projects implemented by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation in a number of cities of France, Russia, Hungary, Italy, and Germany contribute to bringing nations together, and the successful integration of cultures. Projects related to the design of parks and the restoration of historical monuments are of moral significance, and are becoming a kind of symbol for calling for friendship and peace all over the world. On May 10, the Heydar Aliyev Foundation will celebrate its 10th anniversary. Thanks to its advanced organizational skills and tireless efforts, the Foundation has walked a glorious path, having become the bearer of universal values in Azerbaijan and abroad, and a symbol of development and prosperity, hope, and humanity.

The Heydar Aliyev Center embodies Azerbaijan’s dedication to promoting the Creative spirit. ●

- 2 Azeri-French ties extend beyond the oil and gas industry
- 3 The First Lady spending time with Azerbaijan’s children