

---

## Aliyev presides over meeting of government on socioeconomic results

Azerbaijan - Heyder Aliyev Foundation - 12/1/2008

---

PRESIDENT ILHAM ALIYEV PRESIDES OVER MEETING OF GOVERNMENT ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC RESULTS OF 2007 AND OUTSTANDING TASKS IN 2008

President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev presided over the meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers on Friday on the results of socio-economic development in the country in 2007 and outstanding tasks in 2008.

The meeting started with opening remarks of President Ilham Aliyev who described the year 2007 as successful for the economy of Azerbaijan.

'The Gross Domestic Product grew about 25%. Thus, as a result of fundamental economic reforms that have been carried out in the country for the past four years, the economy of Azerbaijan has surged 96%, about two-fold. It is the indicator, which has no analogues in the world,' said the President, adding that industrial production also increased 24% this year.

According to the Head of State, majority of projects have been completed, and investments to the oil and gas fields have almost come to an end, and started reducing. Saying that the amount of investments made up over \$6 billion, the President stressed internal investments constituted the major part of investments. It shows that foreign and internal investors believe in the Azerbaijan's economic potential, and Azerbaijan can maintain its positions as the attractive country for investments

The President underlined that budget expenditures are being dramatically increased. Azerbaijan is one of the world's leading countries in terms of growth dynamics of the budget expenditures

'Budget expenditures have increased ten-fold for the past four years, and 2008 prospective budget amounts to \$12 bln. It allows us to solve the tasks facing our country, including infrastructure, social problems, and to implement economic, transport and energy projects by using our own resources,'- said President Aliyev.

Stressing that salary and pension increase trends are underway, Azerbaijani Leader said, 'minimum wages and pensions have been increased by 20% to AZN 60 from January 1, 2008. Given it was 9 manats a few years ago, it is a huge progress. No doubt, minimum wages and pensions will be increased during 2008,'- the Head of State underlined.

President Aliyev said targeted social assistance program is being successfully implemented. According to him, the program covers 78 thousand families, and each family receives an average of \$100.

The Head of State said great actions were taken in 2007 to eradicate poverty in the country.

'While poverty level in Azerbaijan was 49%, it fell to 16% as of January 1, 2008. It is a great achievement, great indicator,'- Ilham Aliyev underlined. The President pledged that there will be no needy stratum in Azerbaijan.

The Head of State noted that shutdown of the last refugee camp was an important milestone achieved in 2007. President Ilham Aliyev said he

accomplished his promise to close down refugee camps made on the eve of 2003 presidential elections.

`As you know, we adopted a new program last year to solve social problems of refugees and internally displaced persons. The program envisages construction of new settlements,'- said President Ilham Aliyev.

Azerbaijani Leader noted 2008 state budget envisages enough funds for construction of schools, hospitals, and cultural centers.

`The state program on socio-economic development of regions adopted in February 2007 is going to be completed in the end of this year. The major part of the five-year program has almost been implemented. Moreover, the issues not included in 2004 were added to the program. Of course, we could not include everything in the program in 2004. The program reflected main areas, main issues. Amid our increasing economic capabilities, we made great supplements to the program. Thus, no one doubts that the state program on socio-economic development of regions will be successfully implemented'

`I would like to return once more to the year 2003. In one of my statements that I made on the eve of presidential elections, I said that we have to pay attention to development of regions where we must open new jobs, eradicate unemployment, ensure that people will stay in the regions, villages and settlements, and develop infrastructure there,'- the Head of State said

Noting that the five-year program has been implemented for four years, the Head of State stressed that 640 thousand new jobs have been opened for the past four years with 460 thousand of them being permanent. President added that only during 2007, 145 thousand new jobs were opened, 105 thousand of them are permanent.

Speaking about construction of new school buildings, the Head of State said: `We have constructed 1200 schools, overhauled hundreds of schools, constructed additional school buildings. The Ministry of Education recently reported school student to one computer ratio is 29 to 1 now, but it was 1000 to 1 three-four years ago,'- the President said.

The President said development of the non-energy sector means creation of new jobs, development of regions, and in general, all-rounded development of Azerbaijan, stressing, `processes underway in the regions show that all programs that we have adopted are being implemented and I am sure, the year 2008 will not be an exception'

The Head of State spoke about development of Azerbaijan's oil and gas sector in 2007, saying 42 million tons of oil was produced in Azerbaijan in 2007. `Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline was commissioned in the same year. In 2007, Azerbaijan's gas production grew to a considerable extent and this process is underway. Volume of gas extracted from both `Shahdeniz' and State Oil Company's old deposits has increased. Gas pipelines are being laid to new regions and settlements.' President Aliyev said this process must be continued in 2008 as well.

President stated that the government has been allocating a huge amount of funds to the transport sector. `We see new roads, bridges, highways in our everyday life. These processes will be continued in 2008 as well.'

The Head of State said that the people support all these programs. Otherwise, none of them could have been realized, he underlined.

The President spoke about Azerbaijan's foreign policy. He said Azerbaijan strengthened its position in the international arena in 2007. `We have boosted bilateral relations with neighboring and friendly countries. I can

say that we found more allies in 2007. Azerbaijan strengthens its role both on a bilateral basis and within international organizations,'- the President added.

BAKU. 12.01.2008. AzerTAG.

---