

Azerbaijan's first Formula success

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Azerbaijan has asserted itself as a sporting nation. The successes achieved by our athletes in the 25 years of independence both in and outside the country are evidence of that. Azerbaijani sportsmen have steadily improved on their Olympic results by winning more medals each time. In particular, Azerbaijan won only one silver medal in the first Olympic Games it joined as a team in Atlanta in 1996, three (two gold and one bronze) medals in Sydney in 2000, five (one gold and four bronze) medals in Athens in 2004, seven (one gold, two silver and four bronze) medals in Beijing in 2008 and 10 (two gold, two silver and six bronze) medals in London in 2012. Azerbaijan finished the London Games in 30th place in overall team standings, 15th among European states and third among Muslim countries. By the time this issue of our magazine reaches our readers, they will have received news of further victories of Azerbaijani athletes in the Rio Games.

The fact that Azerbaijan has successfully hosted a number of prestigious sporting events in recent years attests to the level of the country's social and economic development. It is also an indicator of Azerbaijan's global recognition as a sporting nation. Despite the occupation of 20 percent of Azerbaijani territory, it is impossible to ignore the proportions of the country's development. Having successfully hosted the inaugural European Games last year, Azerbaijan has also conducted its first Formula 1 Grand Prix this year, drawing the attention of millions of people around the world. In addition to being a major international sporting event, Formula 1 is also a huge contributor to the development of relations between countries, strengthening of friendship and cooperation, and greater tourist influx.

We thought it would be appropriate to open this issue of "IRS-Heritage" with the subject of sport. We believe that the extensive story about the Formula 1 event in Baku, the abundant material and cultural heritage, the little known facts of history and other stories will be of interest to our readers. We look forward to "IRS-Heritage" becoming your true companion throughout the summer holidays.