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The opening ceremony of "Steam Azerbaijan Festival 2021" was held on 9 December at Baku Expo Centre with the support of the Ministry of Education as part of the STEAM Azerbaijan project.

The ceremony was attended by Education Minister Emin Amrullayev, members of the National Assembly, community representatives and guests from Turkey and Israel.

Organized for the first time for students in grades 6-11, the festival aims to identify talented and creative students with a diversity of ideas and to develop new opportunities for cooperation and communication between students.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the festival, Education Minister Emin Amrullayev said that STEAM is a project combining digital skills, competencies of the 21st century. The Minister noted that more than 1,000 students from different regions of Azerbaijan took part in the festival with over 350 projects.

Stressing that STEAM project is implemented in our country due to the support of First Vice-President Mehriban Aliyeva, the Minister said that this project covers more than 100,000 students. After outlining the STEAM approach to education, the Minister wished the festival success.

Head of STEAM Azerbaijan project Igrar Nazarov said that STEAM project has been implemented since 2019-2020 school year, and noted that currently the project covers 302 schools, 1600 teachers. The project is carried out for 2 hours a week, 68 hours a year in VI, VII, VIII classes. Out of the schools, where the project is being implemented, 189 schools are located in Baku, while 113 schools are located in regions.

Igrar Nazarov spoke about content development under the project, preparation of new innovative textbooks, integration of STEAM education into the next levels of education, as well as cooperation with various foreign companies. The project manager noted that the STEAM project regularly organizes competitions and contests to identify talented students.

In his speech at the festival, Israeli start-up and acceleration expert Tal Katran touched on the importance of the festival and noted that this festival gives students the opportunity to gain knowledge and skills and work as a team. At the end of his speech, the guest wished the participants success.

After the speeches, the competitions in the various categories that were foreseen within the festival kicked off. It was noted that competitions will be held in the categories of "STEAM Open (Makerthon)", "Hackathon", "Micro:bit", "Lego Sumo senior", "Lego Sumo junior", "Line follower", "3D Cad", "Short movie", "Edu:drone", and "Humanoid robot". In addition, participants will be introduced to the "Escape Room" module for the Quest technology and will be able to become active participants in the game.

On the second day of the festival, on 10 December, there will be an awards ceremony for the winning teams of the incentive competitions.

It should be noted that the main aim of the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art & Math) project, which was initiated by the Ministry of Education, is to develop creative thinking and collaborative skills in students, create opportunities for learning through the

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creative process, not to teach subjects in isolation but to combine them into a unified learning model based on real applications, enhance students' ability to use modern IT equipment by introducing different programming languages.