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On 27 October, the opening ceremony of the IE Leadership and Innovation Center took place in Baku with the participation of high-level representatives.

The Center is established within the framework of a strategic partnership between "PASHA Holding", SOCAR and IE University of Spain with support of the Ministry of Science and Education and the Ministry of Economy. The Center aims to support the development of human capital in Azerbaijan, promote the application of new knowledge and ideas, to strengthen leadership skills and to form a regional platform for innovation and international cooperation.

Deputy Minister of Economy Samad Bashirli, Deputy Minister of Science and Education Hasan Hasanli, Chief Executive Officer of "PASHA Holding" Jalal Gasimov, Vice-President of SOCAR Ziba Mustafayeva and Executive President of IE University Santiago Iniguez de Onzono made speeches during the official opening part of the ceremony.

In his speech, Deputy Minister of Science and Education Hasan Hasanli assessed the establishment of the center as an important step in the direction of enhancing the knowledge and skills of youths and specialists in our country and expanding professional development opportunities.

Deputy Minister spoke about the achievements obtained in increasing the quality and accessibility of education within the framework of the implementation of the State Strategy for Development of Education adopted in 2013. He gave information on reforms performed in the fields of teacher recruitment, certification and professional development, projects oriented to development of students' digital skills, as well as works implemented in the direction of early detection and development of talents. Hasan Hasanli touched upon the conclusions of international assessments and stated that, the indicators on Baku in PISA 2025 increased significantly in comparison with 2022.

Deputy Minister spoke about the expansion of international cooperation in the field of higher education and stated the progress got by higher educational institutions of our country in international rankings. He drew

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attention to joint higher educational initiatives such as the French-Azerbaijani University (UFAZ), the Italian-Azerbaijani University and the Turkish-Azerbaijani University, as well as double degree programs implemented with seven international partners.

Hasan Hasanli emphasized that, the systematic activity of the government has created opportunities for formation of a strong talent base. He stated that, the development of this potential creates the way for preparation of future leaders, executives and specialists meeting the requirements of the modern economy. Deputy Minister also stated the importance of the continuous renewal of the knowledge and skills of currently acting executives and specialists. Hasan Hasanli emphasized the importance of joint activity of the state, business and universities in this direction and stated that, the partnership between IE University, "PASHA Holding" and SOCAR creates important opportunities to connect international practice with local needs. He brought to the attention that, it is possible to gain these objects together by using the opportunities of the universities and SABAH.City of our country.

In his speech, Executive President of IE University Santiago Iniguez de Onzonos stated that, they aim to combine entrepreneurship and innovation approaches, as well as the driving role of humanitarian sciences in educational changes, with the opportunities created by technology. He noted that, their aim is to drive transformation not only in Baku and Azerbaijan, but also in the entire continent. The university president emphasized that, there are startups, companies and talented persons in Azerbaijan with the potential to create value and contribute to economic growth and stated that, the initiative will serve to speed the realization of this potential.

Chief Executive Officer of "PASHA Holding" Jalal Gasimov emphasized the importance of the development of human capital, knowledge and experience exchange, as well as the promotion of an innovative thinking style in terms of long-term economic development and competitiveness.

We would like to note, that, the Memorandum of Understanding on establishment of the center has been signed between "PASHA Holding", SOCAR and IE University on 28 April 2026 with the witness of the Ministry of Science and Education and the Ministry of Economy.