

FEATURE

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Memorial of a Korean Patriot

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HARBIN

Jan. 19 (Xinhua) — The memorial to Korean freedom fighter Ahn Jung Geun, provides people with the details of the man's bravery against Japanese aggression at the beginning of last century.

The facility commemorates an historical figure, but reminds people of today not to forget the past.

On Oct. 26, 1909, Ahn shot dead Hirobumi Ito, the former Japanese prime minister and then resident-general of Korea, in Harbin railway station. Ahn was hanged in March 1910 by Japanese forces.

Ahn did not stop Japan's ambitious aggression. In the decades leading up to 1945, Japanese forces wreaked havoc on the Korean Peninsula, in China and in other Asian countries.

The current Japanese leadership have not reflected on the actions of their predecessors. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit to the

Yasukuni Shrine last month infuriated and saddened China and the Republic of Korea (ROK). Abe's attitude toward history has been condemned worldwide.

The opening of Ahn's memorial is not to inflict pain, but to shed light on the history of northeastern Asia. Nor does the memorial try to rekindle the hatred of the past. Rather, it stands as a remembrance of brutal Japanese colonization and the Chinese and Korean suffering that came with it.



Korean freedom fighter Ahn Jung Geun

Ahn said during his trial that he killed Ito for the independence of his motherland and peace in the Orient.

Abe's attempts to amend Japan's post-war pacifist constitution and strengthen its military might, show no remorse for Japan's past and pose a threat to peace and stability.

History is the teacher of life. Alarm bells shall not go unheeded. With Japan treading a dangerous path once again, the need for vigilance and a joint international effort is clear if we are to prevent a Japanese militarist resurgence.

Ahn Jung Geun shot dead Hirobumi Ito, who had served as the prime minister of Japan four times before becoming resident-general of Korea in 1905, at Harbin railway station on Oct. 26, 1909.

Ahn was born in 1879 in an area currently named Haeju, Hwanghaenam-do in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

In his early adulthood, he devoted himself to education. He later joined the armed resistance against Japanese aggression in northeast China and Russia's far-east.

After the first Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), Japan accelerated its pace of aggression and annexation of the Korean Peninsula.

The Korean Empire was proclaimed in 1897 to replace the old dynasty. In 1905, the Korean Empire was forced to sign the Japan-Korea Protectorate Treaty, otherwise known as the Eulsa Treaty, and Ito became the first resident-general of Korea.

With its victory the Russian-Japanese war, the Japanese government sent Ito to Harbin in 1909 to meet the finance minister of the Russian empire and discuss the annexation of the Korean Peninsula and the partition of Japanese and Russian interests in northeast China.

Ahn decided to grasp the opportunity to kill Ito and to reveal Japan's aggression and ambition to the world.

In court, Ahn insisted that he killed Ito as a lieutenant general of the Korean resistance army for the independence of his motherland and peace in East Asia.

Ahn was hanged on March 26, 1910. In his last words, he asked that his remains be buried near Harbin Park and returned to his country after independence.

After confirming Ito's plans, Ahn arrived at the Harbin railway station on Oct. 22, 1909 on a postal train which originated in Vladivostok, Russia.

On the morning of Oct. 26, 1909, Ito's special train arrived at Harbin station. While Ito inspected the Russian guard of honor on the platform, escorted by the Russian finance minister, Ahn passed the parade and pulled out his pistol, shooting Ito three times in the chest and abdomen. Ito died 20 minutes later.

On Nov. 3, 1909, Ahn and eight others connected to the killing were sent to a prison managed by Japan and Russia at Lyvshun in northeast China's Liaoning Province.

In early December 1909, Japanese foreign affairs authorities issued a secret order for Ahn's execution.

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After Ahn's execution, his two brothers asked Japan to deliver up his body but were

refused. Ahn was secretly buried somewhere in Lyvshun.

In recent years, China, the Republic of Korea and the DPRK have made great efforts in searching for Ahn's remains, but to no end.