
KAZAKHSTAN SETS TIMELINE FOR SWITCH FROM CYRILLIC TO LATIN ALPHABET

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Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev on Wednesday (April 12) set out a timeline for the ex-Soviet country to switch from Cyrillic letters to the Latin alphabet as part of a modernisation drive.

The 76-year-old leader has long called for ditching the Cyrillic alphabet - which Kazakhstan shares with neighbour and ally Russia - in favour of the more widely used Latin one.

In an article published in the state-owned Egemen Kazakhstan newspaper Nazarbayev called for the government to begin "preparatory work" and "create a schedule" for the switch.

"By the end of 2017, after consultation with academics and representatives of the public, a single standard for the new Kazakh alphabet and script should be developed," Nazarbayev wrote.

"From 2018, (Kazakhstan) must train specialists to teach the new alphabet and produce textbooks for secondary schools," Nazarbayev added in the Kazakh-language paper.

Nazarbayev has said in the past that the country should switch to the Latin alphabet by 2025.

The Kazakh language is part of the Turkic family, like Turkish. It currently uses a modified version of the Cyrillic alphabet with 42 letters.

Kazakhstan briefly used the Latin alphabet during the Soviet era before switching to Cyrillic letters in 1940.

Kazakhstan is a close ally of Russia and has the largest ethnic Russian population of the five Central Asian states that gained independence from Moscow in 1991.

Russian enjoys an official constitutional status and Nazarbayev uses it along with Kazakh in speeches.

Russian leader Vladimir Putin enraged Kazakh nationalists in 2014 by describing Kazakhstan as part of "the greater Russian world" and saying it never had statehood before 1991, in comments shortly after Moscow's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine.

Kazakhstan's education ministry has announced plans in recent years to increase teaching of English in schools but has faced opposition from defenders of the Kazakh language.

Kaynak/Source: