
KAZAKHSTAN'S LATEST ALPHABET REPLACES ONES BROUGHT IN LAST YEAR

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But the new system, which had 32 letters and used apostrophes to denote distinct sounds, was greeted with derision and complaints it made reading and writing more complicated.

According the Eurasianet news website, Nazarbayev suddenly signed a decree bringing in the alphabet during what was meant to be a consultation on several proposed versions.

The offending apostrophes have now been replaced by accents, adopting the same system as nearby Turkmenistan.

The new alphabet comes despite the government recently embarking on a publicity campaign extolling the virtues of the old one.

It will be gradually rolled out over seven years though some businesses and shops as well as some local authorities had already begun using the original replacement alphabet.

The original replacement alphabet was introduced suddenly but was found to make reading an writing more complicated.

The latest alphabet is also bad news for the Arqalyq Habary newspaper which began publishing with the new alphabet, but will now have to change again.

Although Kazakh has been the state language since Kazakhstan became independent in 1991, only 62 percent of the population said they were fluent in both written and spoken Kazakh during a the most recent national census in 2009.

Russian is more widespread with 85 percent claiming fluency in the same census. Russian is recognised as an official language in Kazakhstan.

The oil-rich former Soviet republic of 18 million has very close ties with Moscow, its main trading partner, but is also wary of Russia's ambitions to maintain its political influence throughout the region.

Several other Turkic nations, including Turkey itself, ex-Soviet Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, have also switched to Latin alphabets.

Kaynak/Source: