
KAZAKHSTAN HOLDS NATIONWIDE EXAM IN SHIFT AWAY FROM CYRILLIC ALPHABET

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ALMATY -- Kazakhstan has held a nationwide exam to test students' proficiency with the Latin alphabet, part of the former Soviet republic's shift away from Cyrillic.

The 30-minute test was held simultaneously on November 14 at universities across the Central Asian country, with students listening to a text read out over loudspeakers and writing it down using a Latin-based alphabet.

The Ministry of Culture and Sports also invited people to take the test at home, informally, through two major radio stations and two websites.

The goal is to gradually start introducing the new alphabet to ordinary citizens in the country of 18.5 million.

President Nursultan Nazarbaev announced in April 2017 that all publications, documents, and street signs will switch from a Cyrillic-based alphabet to a Latin-based alphabet by 2025, and he signed a decree on the shift that October.

The move is seen as an effort to emphasize Kazakh culture and distance the country from Russia and the Soviet era.

In 1929, Soviet authorities replaced traditional Arabic-based alphabets used by Muslim minorities in the Soviet Union with Latin-based national alphabets.

In 1940, the Latin alphabet was replaced with Cyrillic, the alphabet used in the Russian language.

On November 2, the first Kazakh-language newspaper in post-Soviet Kazakhstan to be printed in the Latin-based alphabet was issued.

<https://www.rferl.org/a/kazakhstan-holds-nationwide-exam-in-shift-away-from-cyrillic-alphabet/29600469.html>

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