

New Kazakh Leader Vows to Keep Friendly Ties With Russia

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Kazakhstan's new president has vowed to preserve a pro-Russian foreign policy as his arrival in Moscow signaled he does not plan to deviate from his predecessor's course.

Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, who [arrived](#) in Moscow for his first official visit on Wednesday, became the oil-rich country's interim president after longtime leader Nursultan Nazarbayev stepped down two weeks ago. Russia is the former Soviet republic's largest trading partner.

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"I'm pleased to be able to reaffirm the unbreakable bonds of friendship, alliance and strategic partnership between our countries," Tokayev [told](#) the government-run Rossiiskaya Gazeta newspaper ahead of his visit.

He [called](#) Russian-Kazakh ties a "benchmark" of interstate relations, the *Kommersant*

business publication reported.

At the same, Tokayev has [promised](#) to continue Nazarbayev's plans introduced in 2017 to gradually switch the Kazakh alphabet from Cyrillic to Latin-based letters.

Although Russian is recognized as an official language in Kazakhstan, the switch was [seen](#) as a reflection of Kazakhstan's wariness of Russia's ambitions to maintain political influence in the region.

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

Reuters contributed reporting to this article.

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