Putin Praises Kyrgyzstan for 'Special Status' of Russian Language

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Vladimir Putin and Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov. **kremlin.ru**

President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday praised Kyrgyzstan for preserving the "special status" of the Russian language, even as the Central Asian country moves to strengthen the use of Kyrgyz in public life.

"I'd like to note and thank you for the fact that the Russian language has been given a special status in Kyrgyzstan," Putin told Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov during talks at the Kremlin.

"This allows us to work more efficiently in a number of other areas, including the economy," he said, pointing to an 11% increase in trade between the two countries in 2024.

Putin's remarks came a week after Kyrgyzstan's parliament passed a bill requiring public officials to be proficient in Kyrgyz and mandating that at least 60% of broadcast content on television and radio be in Kyrgyz. The bill also requires place names to be written in Kyrgyz and stipulates that Kyrgyz-language text in advertisements appear larger than Russian.

Japarov has not yet signed the bill into law.

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While both Kyrgyz and Russian are official state languages in Kyrgyzstan, Russian continues to carry higher social prestige across much of Central Asia, providing access to more prestigious jobs and opportunities for labor migration to Russia.

But Russia's invasion of Ukraine — along with Russian officials' nationalistic rhetoric and claims to defend Russian–speaking minorities in former Soviet republics — has prompted many Central Asian countries to revive and promote their national languages.

Some Russian politicians have criticized those efforts, accusing officials in Central Asia of seeking to distance themselves from Moscow.

AFP contributed reporting.

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