

Japan considers changing romanization of Japanese

Vocabulary Match

- panel ● system ● official ● pronunciation ● familiar ● suggests ●
- sound ● group ● known ● method ● formal ● advises

Article

A government panel in Japan is thinking about changing the way Japanese is written using the Roman alphabet. The current system, called Kunrei-shiki, became official in 1954. However, many people find the Hepburn system easier to understand because it is closer to English pronunciation. For example, Kunrei uses "ti" for a sound, but Hepburn writes it as "chi."

Although Kunrei is taught in schools, most people are more familiar with Hepburn. It is the system used on signs, maps, passports, train stations, and in English textbooks. The panel now suggests switching to a style based on Hepburn. A final decision is expected by autumn.

Quiz

1. What is the government panel thinking about changing?
2. Why do many people find the Hepburn system easier to understand?
3. Where is the Hepburn system used?
4. When is the final decision expected?

Conversation

A: Hey, did you hear about the change in writing Japanese?

B: Yeah, they might switch to the Hepburn system!

A: I always found Hepburn easier to read.

B: Same here! It's like reading English.

A: Do you think they'll really change it?

B: I hope so, it would make life simpler for everyone.

Discussion

1. Do you usually use Kunrei or Hepburn? Why?
2. What languages don't use the Roman alphabet?
3. Have you ever tried to write in another alphabet?
4. What is your favorite way to learn a new language?