

Japan issues new yen banknotes packed with 3D hologram technology to fight counterfeiting

By Yuri Kageyama
AP Business Writer

TOKYO — Japan issued its first new banknotes in two decades last month, yen packed with 3D hologram technology to fight counterfeiting.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida praised as historic the state-of-the-art anti-counterfeit traits of the new 10,000 yen, 5,000 yen, and 1,000 yen bills.

“I hope the people will like the new bills, and they will help energize the Japanese economy,” he told reporters at the Bank of Japan.

While the new bills were released with fanfare, currency already in use will remain valid. In fact, people will still need older bills to use most vending machines and to pay bus fares, local media reported.

Kishida noted the people featured on the new bills celebrate Japanese capitalism, women’s equality, and scientific innovation.

The 10,000 yen bill, worth roughly \$62 at the current exchange rate, has the face of Eiichi Shibusawa, known as “the father of Japanese capitalism,” a key figure in building Japan’s modern economy. He is credited with founding hundreds of



companies.

The 5,000 yen bill, worth about \$30, features Umeko Tsuda, a pioneer feminist and educator who founded a college.

The 1,000 yen note, worth about \$6.20, portrays physician and bacteriologist Shibasaburo Kitasato, who was instrumental in the research of tetanus and the bubonic plague.

The backs of each of the bills feature

Tokyo Station, wisteria flowers, and ukiyo-e artist Katsushika Hokusai’s Mount Fuji, respectively.

The new bills also feature larger printing so they’re easier to read, especially for the nation’s aging population.

By the end of March next year, nearly 7.5 billion new banknotes will have been printed, according to the government. The

FIGHTING FAKES. Bank of Japan (BOJ) governor Kazuo Ueda delivers a speech during a ceremony marking the releases of new banknotes at BOJ headquarters in Tokyo, Japan. Also pictured are pallets (L-R) of the new 1,000 yen, 5,000 yen, and 10,000 yen bills behind a sign that says, “New Bank of Japan banknotes start being issued.” (Japan Pool/Kyodo News via AP)

amount of money in the new bills going out in a single day is estimated at 1.6 trillion yen (\$10 billion).

It may take some time for ordinary people to get hold of the new bills. They first are going to banks and other financial organizations. Then, they’ll be distributed to automatic teller machines and stores, according to the Bank of Japan.

A majority of transactions in Japan still are done in cash and cashless payments have been slower to catch on than in many other countries.

“Although the world is moving toward cashless interactions, we believe cash remains important as a way for safely settling payments anywhere and anytime,” said Bank of Japan governor Kazuo Ueda.

AP videographer Mayuko Ono contributed to this report.

By Hyung-Jin Kim
The Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has regained weight and appears to have obesity-related health problems such as high blood pressure and diabetes, and his officials are looking for new medicines abroad to treat them, South Korea’s spy agency have told lawmakers.

North Korean officials seek medicine for Kim’s health problems related to obesity, Seoul says

The 40-year-old Kim, known for heavy drinking and smoking, comes from a family with a history of heart problems. Both his father and grandfather, who ruled North Korea before his 2011 inheritance of power, died of heart issues.

Some observers said Kim, who is about 5’7” and previously weighed 308 pounds, appeared to have lost a large amount of weight in 2021, likely from changing his diet. But recent state media footage show

he has regained the weight.

The National Intelligence Service (NIS), South Korea’s main spy agency, told lawmakers in a closed-door briefing that Kim is estimated to weigh about 308 pounds again and is in a high-risk group for heart disease, according to Lee Seong Kweun, one of the lawmakers.

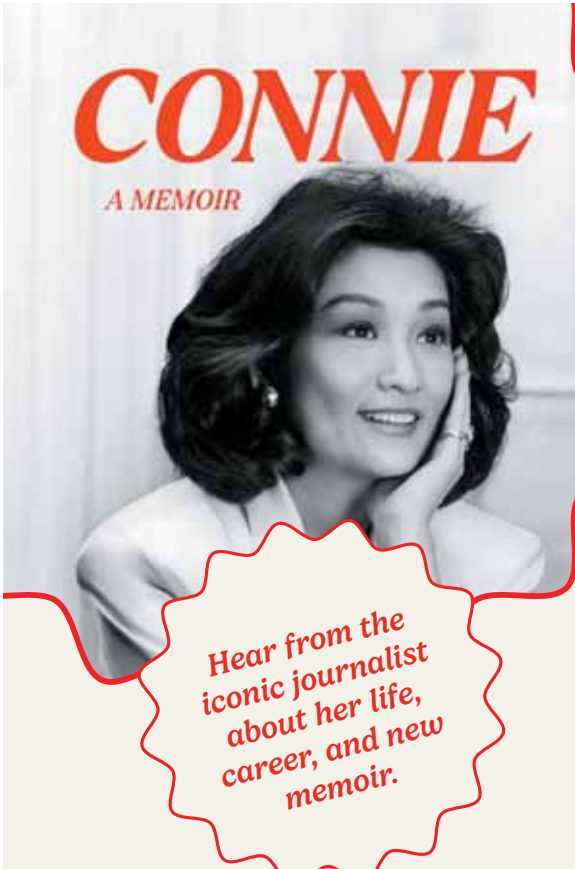
Lee said the NIS told lawmakers that Kim has shown symptoms of high blood pressure and diabetes since his early 30s.

Another lawmaker, Park Sunwon, said the NIS believes Kim’s obesity is linked to his drinking, smoking, and stress.

Lee and Park quoted the NIS as saying it obtained intelligence that North Korean officials have been trying to get new medications abroad for Kim’s suspected high blood pressure and diabetes.

North Korea is one of the most secretive countries in the world, and there is vir-

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