

- 2. Signed, sealed, discarded: Japan to all but scrap hallowed hanko (Japan Times article)

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/11/13/national/hanko-stamping-paperwork/>

## Signed, sealed, discarded: Japan to all but scrap hallowed *hanko*



- Hanko seals no longer in use by companies are seen collected at a Tokyo temple for a "memorial service" in October before being discarded. | KYODO

- REUTERS

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- Nov 13, 2020

## Hanko

The nation is set to break with its age-old tradition of requiring citizens to use personal seals to stamp all official documents, scrapping their use in nearly 15,000 administrative processes, an official at the Cabinet Office said on Friday.

The use of seals will be abolished for all but 83 instances such as automobile registration, the official said, affecting transactions carried out by millions of residents every day. The official said no specific timetable has been set for phasing out seal use.

The radical switch comes as newly installed Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga seeks to boost use of digital technology to streamline processes and spur lackluster growth in the world's third-biggest economy.

A custom originally imported from China more than a thousand years ago, the use of *hanko* seals was formalized by Japan's government in the mid-1800s.

With far more people working from home in Japan than previously amid the coronavirus pandemic, the custom has come under criticism with millions of workers forced to commute to their offices because of the need for contracts and proposals to be stamped using the seals.

Taro Kono, minister in charge of regulatory reforms, stoked controversy in recent weeks after he posted a picture of a seal with a phrase "abolish stamps" engraved on it on Twitter.

Kono's move triggered an angry response last week from the All Japan Seal Industry Association, representing 890 seal manufacturers and retailers that serve a population of about 126 million.