

Iran war turns Japan's snack packaging black and white

18th May 2026



The Iran war has brought unexpected consequences for food makers in Japan. A shortage of a product needed to manufacture ink has caused several companies to change the design of their food wrapping. Major snack manufacturer Calbee is

temporarily changing the packaging for some of its most popular products to black and white. The company sells some of the best-selling potato chips in Japan. A spokesperson said some of its products will come with a printed message that explains: "Packaged to save oil-related materials."

Meanwhile, food and beverage maker Kagome will make some of the wrapping for its popular ketchup transparent in a bid to deal with the ink shortage.

Tensions in the Middle East are responsible for a shortage of a hydrocarbon liquid called naphtha. This is an important component in the production of plastics, solvents and printing ink. It is derived from crude oil. At the end of April, Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi assured industry leaders that Japan had secured enough naphtha to last beyond this year. She said countermeasures would be taken to ensure a supply of the liquid. These include a ramping up of domestic production, and a threefold increase in naphtha imports from countries outside the Middle East. However, Calbee said: "Depending on how the situation evolves, we anticipate the possibility of additional impacts arising."

Sources: asahi.com / nhk.org / mainichi.jp

Writing

Using coloured ink on packaging is unnecessary and bad for the environment. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

Iran war / consequences / food makers / ink / black and white / snacks / potato chips / tensions / the Middle East / hydrocarbon / plastics / industry leaders / production

True / False

- 1) All of the packaging ink in Japan has run out. T / F
- 2) A Japanese snack maker is changing all its packaging to black and white. T / F
- 3) A message on the potato chips explains the black and white packaging. T / F
- 4) A company that makes ketchup will change its ketchup colour from red. T / F
- 5) The ink shortage is because of the increased price of crude oil. T / F
- 6) Japan's prime minister said her country has enough ink until next year. T / F
- 7) Japan will buy three times more naphtha from Middle Eastern countries. T / F
- 8) A potato chip maker said it is thinking about future problems. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. consequences | a. drink |
| 2. shortage | b. provisionally |
| 3. temporarily | c. obtained |
| 4. products | d. scarcity |
| 5. beverage | e. strained relations |
| 6. tensions | f. expect |
| 7. liquid | g. results |
| 8. secured | h. increasing |
| 9. ramping up | i. goods |
| 10. anticipate | j. fluid |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) What has happened in the Middle East recently?
- c) How important is oil in our lives?
- d) What should we do about plastics being used for food packaging?
- e) How good or bad are potato chips for us?
- f) What additional impacts might arise from the Iran war?
- g) What is your favourite food packaging?
- h) What questions would you like to ask the food makers?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. unexpected | a. with a printed message |
| 2. A shortage of a product needed | b. maker |
| 3. its products will come | c. beyond this year |
| 4. food and beverage | d. called naphtha |
| 5. in a bid to deal | e. to manufacture ink |
| 6. a shortage of a hydrocarbon liquid | f. of domestic production |
| 7. an important component in the | g. consequences for food makers |
| 8. enough naphtha to last | h. in naphtha imports |
| 9. a ramping up | i. with the ink shortage |
| 10. a threefold increase | j. production of plastics |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think of food packaging?
- Would you mind if all food packaging was black and white?
- How has the war in Iran affected you?
- What do you think of potato chips?
- Have you ever experienced shortages in anything?
- What are the snacks in your country like?
- What do you think of printer ink?
- Is there too much information and 'stuff' on food packaging?

Spelling

- unexpected gesncesucneo for food makers
- a product needed to ftcaamunure ink
- Calbee is tmralieoryp changing the packaging
- food and bregveae maker
- wrapping for its popular pkchetu
- ratenasnptr
- shortage of a roybhacrodn
- This is an important ptmoecnon
- plastics, etsvnslo and printing ink
- It is derived from eudrc oil
- a lrhtofede increase
- we eaicnitpta the possibility

Answers – Synonym Match

| | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. g | 2. d | 3. b | 4. i | 5. a |
| 6. e | 7. j | 8. c | 9. h | 10. f |

Comprehension Questions

Listen to / read the news article. Answer these questions. (Answers are on p. 27 of the 27-page PDF.)

| | |
|-----|---|
| 1. | What kind of consequences does the article say the Iran war has had? |
| 2. | What is there a shortage of? |
| 3. | For how long will the potato chip packaging be black and white? |
| 4. | What does a message on a potato chip bag say the packaging will save? |
| 5. | What will happen to some of the packaging of a popular ketchup? |
| 6. | What kind of liquid is naphtha? |
| 7. | What is naphtha used to make besides plastics and printing ink? |
| 8. | Who assured Japanese industry that there would be enough naphtha? |
| 9. | What will Japan do to domestic naphtha production? |
| 10. | What will the company Calbee anticipate the possibility of? |

Speaking – Shortages

Rank these with your partner. Put the worst shortages at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|---------------|------------------|
| • Printer ink | • Semiconductors |
| • Chocolates | • Rice |
| • Antibiotics | • Coal |
| • Coffee | • Housing |

Answers – True False

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | F | 2 | F | 3 | T | 4 | F | 5 | F | 6 | T | 7 | F | 8 | T |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.