Crisp new Mandela banknotes in circulation

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SOUTH Africans around the country have begun using the new banknotes released by the Reserve Bank yesterday.

The new notes feature an image of former President Nelson Mandela on the front, with images of the “Big Five” animals on the back of the various banknote denominations.

Reserve Bank Governor Gill Marcus made the first transaction of the day using the new banknotes to purchase goods at a fruit-and-veg store in Pretoria.

Marcus said the currency was a unique symbol of SA's nationhood, with many people handling banknotes every day.

"The Reserve Bank is proud to be able to honour South Africa's struggle icon and first democratically elected President Nelson Mandela in this way," she said.

Marcus said the choice of Mandela as the defining image on the new series recognised his position as a global symbol of real democratic change and a champion of equality, human rights, and a free and fair democratic society.

There are three distinct features of the notes which include a watermark which is an image of Nelson Mandela, which should appear on the left-hand side, while an animal that is on the back of the note should appear within the circle and the denomination numeral appears in micro-lettering in the animals to the left of the image of Nelson Mandela.

This feature can only be seen using a magnifying glass, according to the Reserve Bank.

According to Marc Sternberg, managing director of Spark ATM Systems, each banknote is equipped with state-of-the-art security, technical and design features.

"The new banknotes also have a distinctive feel and make a unique sound when snapped between your fingers," he said.

The new banknotes are in the form of R10, R20, R50, R100 and R200 denominations and have the same sizes and colours as the existing notes.