

# 蒙在鼓裡

*meng2 zai4 gu3 li3*

A property swap between a high government official, her husband and the sister-in-law of a Macau casino tycoon raised questions of a conflict of interest.

The official, Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs Betty Fung Ching Suk-ye, said she did not know the identity of the opposite party in the transaction at the time.

Her assertion was followed by the Facebook post of husband Wilson Fung Wing-yip that he had never told her of the deal between himself and Cheyenne Chan, the other party.

The front page of *Headline Daily* described the actions of the Airport Authority executive director as keeping his wife “蒙在鼓裡” (*meng2 zai4 gu3 li3*). “蒙” (*meng2*) is “to cover,” “在” (*zai4*) “at,” “in,” “鼓” (*gu3*) “a drum” and “裡” (*li3*) “inside.” Literally, “蒙在鼓裡” (*meng2 zai4 gu3 li3*) is “covered inside a drum.” The idiom means “to be deceived,” “to be kept completely in the dark.”

## Idiom by Lon Yan

People generally want to be kept informed and not kept in the dark about developments. In other words, they don't want to be “蒙在鼓裡” (*meng2 zai4 gu3 li3*).

But in political thrillers, aides often keep their boss, usually the president, “蒙在鼓裡” (*meng2 zai4 gu3 li3*) about clandestine dealings of dubious legality to provide the chief with “plausible deniability” should the shady dealings be exposed.

Deniability (推諉不知情的本領) is “the ability to deny something, especially on the basis of being officially uninformed.” So being kept in the dark is not always a bad thing, and is actually preferable in certain situations.

### Terms containing the character “鼓” (*gu3*) include:

打鼓 (*da3 gu3*) - to beat a drum

鼓手 (*gu3 shou3*) - a drummer

鼓勵 (*gu3 li4*) - to encourage

鼓吹 (*gu3 chui1*) - to promote