

不堪設想

bu4 kan1 she4 xiang3

An air conditioner fell from the high floor of a residential building in Tseung Kwan O, crashed into the middle of the road and large pieces of metal flew everywhere.

The machine was dislodged from its supports as a worker was trying to fix it. It was in the middle of the day, so it was sheer luck that the heavy chunk of metal didn't hit any vehicles.

As the Chinese language media said, had cars passed by it would have been “不堪設想” (*bu4 kan1 she4 xiang3*). “不堪” (*bu4 kan1*) means “cannot endure,” “unbearable,” “extremely,” and “設想” (*she4 xiang3*) “to imagine,” “envisage,” “to assume.” Literally, “不堪設想” (*bu4 kan1 she4 xiang3*) is “unbearable to envisage.”

The idiom means “dare not imagine.” When the prospect of something happening is too horrible to contemplate, we can say it is “不堪設想” (*bu4 kan1 she4 xiang3*).

If someone is hit by 27 kilograms of falling met-

Idiom by Lon Yan

al, their head will be crushed, blood will splatter everywhere, a scenario that is clearly “不堪設想” (*bu4 kan1 she4 xiang3*).

The idiom may be used not only in matters of death or injury but also in any potentially disastrous situation, such as being caught smuggling drugs, because it will mean a long jail term or even execution in some countries.

Had lawmakers successfully blocked additional funding to complete the Express Rail Link, the result would also have been “不堪設想” because a humongous amount of time and money would have been wasted, and a big hole in the ground would have to be filled up.

Terms containing the character “想” (*xiang3*) include:

想像 (*xiang3 xiang4*) – to imagine; to visualize

想法 (*xiang3 fa3*) – idea; opinion

想起 (*xiang3 qi3*) – to think of; to recall

幻想 (*huan4 xiang3*) – fantasy