便宜莫貪

bian4 yi2 mo4 tan1

The battery of a mobile phone blew up and caused a small fire at the owner's Fan Ling home, injuring his hands. The victim had bought the battery at a Kwai Chung shop and was assured by the salesman that it was a genuine product, even though the price was clearly way too cheap.

There have been many cases of cheap lithium batteries produced by unknown makers exploding and the lesson for all is "便宜莫貪" (bian4 yi2 mo4 tan1).

"便宜" (bian4 yi2) is "inexpensive," "a small advantage," "a petty gain." "莫" is "don't," and "貪" is "to covet," "to be greedy," "to have a desire for." Literally, "便宜莫貪" (bian4 yi2 mo4 tan1) is "do not covet something cheap," "do not be tempted by petty gains," which is what this colloquial expression means.

"便宜莫貪" (bian4 yi2 mo4 tan1) is said to be the lesson a con man gave to his son, obviously

Idiom by Lon Yan

because offering people an advantage is exactly the trick he used to con people.

"To be keen on gaining petty advantages" is "貪小便宜" (tan1 xiao3 bian4 yi2) - our collective weakness. We should all remember that if something is too good to be true, it usually is.

The government also used "便宜莫貪" (bian4 yi2 mo4 tan1) as the title for its public education video to help people avoid being scammed.

Examples of "便宜" (bian4 yi2) the video cited included offers to buy "high-tech batteries at HK\$100 each that can be resold for 10 times more" and "pay only HK\$10,000 to become a movie star!"

Terms containing the character "便" (bian4) include:

便利 (bian4 li4) – convenient; handy; easy 便利店 (bian4 li4 dian4) – convenience store 不方便 (bu4 fang1 bian4) – inconvenient 便服 (pian2 fu2) – informal dress; leisure clothes