

Idiom by Lon Yan

無微不至

wu2 wei1 bu2 zhi4

The Japanese people's attention to details is well-known, and you can see this everywhere in their society, in their designs, goods they make and even in their public toilets.

As BBC reported recently, the country is "globally renowned for revolutionizing its public toilets, many of which are clean, modern and boast very elaborate high-tech features." This time, the subject of interest is a new smartphone disinfecting toilet sheet provided at the public toilets at Narita Airport in Tokyo by Japanese mobile giant NTT Docomo.

The company noted that a smartphone screen has five times as many germs as compared to a toilet seat, and the sheets were "made to clean screens so foreign tourists could enjoy their travel hygienically."

The Facebook posting of one user summed it up: the Japanese "seem to have

thought of everything. Even things that you didn't think you needed suddenly become items you just can't live without." This approach can be called "無微不至" (wu2 wei1 bu2 zhi4).

"無" (wu2) is "nil," "no," "without," "微" (wei1) "fine," "tiny," "micro," "不" (bu2) "no," "not" and "至" (zhi4) "until," "to arrive," "reach." Literally, "無微不至" (wu2 wei1 bu2 zhi4) is "no tiny not reach," "no small details not reach." If attention reaches every detail, no matter how small, you are meticulous.

So the idiom means "meticulously," "in every possible way," "down to the very last detail."

But there is no greater attention to details in this world than the way parents take care of their children. So "無微不至" (wu2 wei1 bu2 zhi4) is most often used to describe the love of parents.

Terms containing the character "微" (wei1) include:

微細 (wei1 xi4) – very small; minute

微笑 (wei1 xiao4) – a smile

微波爐 (wei1 bo1 lu2) – a microwave oven

微積分 (wei1 ji1 fen1) – calculus