

Idiom by Lon Yan

日 新 月 異

ri4 xin1 yue4 yi4

Guangdong food authorities recently tested rice and rice-related products, and found 44 percent of the samples failing safety standards because of contamination by the heavy-metal cadmium.

But this problem may hopefully be eliminated soon as experts reported having successfully genetically-engineered a cadmium-resistant rice plant.

Science and technology have been advancing very rapidly indeed, and we often read in the news about new inventions and discoveries. Such development can be described by the idiom “日新月異” (*ri4 xin1 yue4 yi4*).

“日” (*ri4*) is “day,” “the sun,” “新” (*xin1*) “new,” “up-to-date,” “月” (*yue4*) “the moon,” “a month,” and “異” (*yi4*) “different.” The “日” (*ri4*) and “月” (*yue4*) in the idiom refer not to the

sun and the moon, but to “day and month.” “日新月異” (*ri4 xin1 yue4 yi4*), literally, is “daily renewal, monthly change.”

It means “to change with each passing day, “every day sees new developments.”

The idiom is mostly used to describe the advancement of technology. So when a person changes his or her mind every day, we don't say they are “日新月異” (*ri4 xin1 yue4 yi4*), unless, of course, we want to mock them.

Another idiom with the character “異” (*ri4 xin1 yue4 yi4*) is “大同小異” (*da4 tong2 xiao3 yi4*) – “largely identical but with minor differences,” “virtually the same.”

Then there is “求同存異” (*qiu2 tong2 cun2 yi4*), meaning “to seek common ground while keeping the differences,” something the Hong Kong community need to do for the sake of harmony.

Terms containing the character “異” (*yi4*) include:

異常 (*yi4 chang2*) – unusual; abnormal

奇異 (*qi2 yi4*) – strange; odd; bizarre

異性 (*yi4 xing4*) – the opposite sex

異樣 (*yi4 yang4*) – peculiar; something peculiar