

Idiom by Lon Yan

衆目睽睽

zhong4 mu4 kui2 kui2

An expectant mother stole six items, including baby shoes and slippers, worth HK\$400 from a Kwun Tong shop.

She managed to escape unnoticed despite a supposedly watertight security system that boasts 12 surveillance cameras. *Headline Daily* reported that the stealing was carried out under “衆目睽睽” (*zhong4 mu4 kui2 kui2*).

“衆” (*zhong4*) is “numerous,” “many,” “a crowd,” “目” (*mu4*) “eye.” “睽” (*kui2*) and “睽” (*kui2 kui2*) both mean “to stare,” “to gaze.” Literally, “衆目睽睽” (*zhong4 mu4 kui2 kui2*) is “eyes of everyone staring,” “under the gaze of public eye.”

“衆目睽睽” (*zhong4 mu4 kui2 kui2*) means “the eyes of the masses are fixed on somebody or something,” “in the public eye,” “in the full light of public notice,” “in the full glare of publicity.”

“衆目” (*zhong4 mu4*) usually means the eyes of real people. The report used “衆目睽睽” (*zhong4 mu4 kui2 kui2*) to refer to the 12 cameras in the sense that they were “multiple eyes,” a tongue-in-cheek usage of the idiom which cleverly spiced up an otherwise rather minor crime story.

“衆目睽睽” (*zhong4 mu4 kui2 kui2*) is often used in connection with blatant (明顯的; 露骨的; 公然的) and unacceptable conduct, like urinating or defecating on MTR trains or by the road side. In such cases, we would say people do such things under “衆目睽睽” (*zhong4 mu4 kui2 kui2*).

And such conducts are described by the idiom “肆無忌憚” (*si4 wu2 ji4 dan4*) – “utterly unscrupulous,” “reckless and without inhibition,” “audacious.”

Terms containing the character “衆” (*zhong4*) include:

眾多 (*zhong4 duo1*) – numerous

眾人 (*zhong4 ren2*) – everybody; all the people

公眾 (*gong1 zhong4*) – the public; the community

眾籌 (*zhong4 chou2*) – crowdfunding