

Idiom by Lon Yan

飢寒交迫

ji1 han2 jiao1 po4

Emergency workers were called out again to rescue people stranded in the wild when typhoon Khanun hit Hong Kong.

The 11 people from mainland China were camping on Sharp Island in Sai Kung. They had to take shelter in the public toilet from gale force winds and rain as Khanun battered Hong Kong. They had also run out of food.

When it became clear that they wouldn't last very long in those conditions, they called the police for help. A Marine Police boat was sent to pick them up. The *Headline Daily* headline described the campers' predicament as “飢寒交迫” (*ji1 han2 jiao1 po4*).

“飢” (*ji1*) is “hungry,” “hunger;” “寒” (*han2*) “cold;” “交” (*jiao1*) “to join,” “cross;” and “迫” (*po4*) “to compel,” “to press.” Literally, “飢寒交迫” (*ji1 han2 jiao1 po4*) is “hard pressed by hunger and coldness;” “both hunger and

cold;” “to be pressed by hunger and cold;” “starving and freezing.”

“飢寒交迫” (*ji1 han2 jiao1 po4*) can be used in its literal sense, like in the case of the campers.

People who live on the street, or those who live in wooden sheds with no money for food, are in a constant state of “飢寒交迫” (*ji1 han2 jiao1 po4*). So the idiom can also be used in its figurative sense to mean “poverty-stricken;” “in desperate poverty.”

Another idiom with the term “交迫” (*jiao1 po4*) is “貧病交迫” (*pin2 bing4 jiao1 po4*), meaning “suffering from both poverty and sickness;” “sick as well as poor;” “down-and-out;” “to be beset by poverty and illness.”

Terms containing the character “寒” (*han2*) include:

寒冬 (*han2 dong1*) – a cold winter

寒冷 (*han2 leng3*) – cold; freezing

寒流 (*han2 liu2*) – a cold snap; a cold stream

孤寒 (*gu1 han2*) – alone and poor; miserly