A 19-year-old Hong Kong girl who suffered third-degree burns to 65 percent of her body in the Taiwan explosion involving colored powder is recovering well and was discharged after spending 68 days in hospital.

It was heart-warming to see the photo of Mok Tsz-ching celebrating her birthday by cutting a big cake at the hospital with doctors and nurses.

Though she has to undergo physical therapy in the next few months, Tsz-ching is in good spirits and her mother is elated. The fireball killed 12 people and injured about 500. Those who were killed have “遇難” (yu4 nan4) - died a tragic death. The survivors can be described as “大難不死” (da4 nan2 bu4 si3). “大” (da4) is “big,” “難” (nan2) is “a disaster,” “不” (bu4) is “no,” “not,” and “死” (si3) is “to die.” Literally, “大難不死” (da4 nan2 bu4 si3) is “big disaster not die.”

It means to “escape from death in a great catastrophe,” “to survive a disaster.” The idiom is used in relation to major disasters, be they natural or man-made, such as a plane crash, an earthquake or a terrorist attack.

A similar idiom is “劫後餘生” (jie2 hou4 yu2 sheng1), which means “lucky survivor from a disaster.” There is a saying “大難不死，必有後福” (da4 nan2 bu4 si3 bi4 you3 hou4 fu2). It means those who survive a catastrophe are bound to have good fortune later on!

Terms containing the character “難” (nan2) include:

劫難 (jie2 nan4) - a fateful calamity
落難 (luo4 nan4) - in dire circumstances
災難 (zai1 nan4) - natural disaster
難民 (nan4 min2) - a refugee