

# 挑撥離間

*tiao3 bo1 li2 jian4*

New MTR Corp Ltd chief Frederick Ma Si-hang called a press conference to dispel rumors that he was involved in a political conspiracy with a media tycoon to topple Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying.

The former secretary for commerce and economic development was furious and called those allegations groundless fabrication. He was rightfully indignant. Such allegations are vicious and could sour the relationship between him and Leung.

This kind of ploy is called “挑撥離間” (*tiao3 bo1 li2 jian4*). “挑撥” (*tiao3 bo1*) means “to stir up,” “to instigate,” and “離間” (*li2 jian4*) “to alienate one person from another.” Literally, “挑撥離間” (*tiao3 bo1 li2 jian4*) is “to stir up and alienate one person from another.”

It means “to sow discord,” “to play A off against B.” It has the same meaning as the English expression “to drive a wedge between,” to

## Idiom by Lon Yan

damage good relationships that two people or groups of people have.

“挑撥離間” (*tiao3 bo1 li2 jian4*) is often perpetrated in office politics, like spreading rumors that a colleague is eyeing the job of his or her superior. Such a ploy would sow the seed of distrust between the colleague and their superior, and is highly damaging.

“挑撥離間” (*tiao3 bo1 li2 jian4*) is one of the most insidious and dirtiest tricks to play on others. The objective is usually achieved through “搬弄是非” (*ban1 nong4 shi4 fei1*) - spreading malicious gossip (惡意的流言蜚語), like saying Ma wanted Leung's job.

### Terms containing the character “離” (*li2*) include:

離開 (*li2 kai1*) - to leave

離婚 (*li2 hun1*) - to divorce

離家出走 (*li2 jia1 chu1 zou3*) - to run away from home

離奇 (*li2 qi2*) - weird