

玉石俱焚

yu4 shi2 ju4 fen2

Some lawmakers have been using procedural hurdles to bring the proceedings of the Legislative Council to a halt.

Stalling tactics are used not only on the copyright amendment bill and requests to top up funding for the construction of the Express Rail Link project, but also on almost all other public works projects tabled for approval.

Such political antics have paralyzed the Legislative Council, turning it into what a *Headline Daily* commentary called “useless meeting.” The commentator described such tactics as “玉石俱焚” (yu4 shi2 ju4 fen2).

“玉” (yu4) is “jade,” “石” (shi2) “rock,” “stone,” “俱” (ju4) “entirely,” “without exception,” and “焚” (fen2) “to burn,” “to incinerate.” Literally, “玉石俱焚” (yu4 shi2 ju4 fen2) “jade, stone burn without exception,” “to burn both jade and stone.”

In the idiom, “玉” (yu4) stands for things that are

Idiom by Lon Yan

good, valuable, as opposed to “石” (shi2) which is not really worth anything hence is a metaphor for things that are bad or undesirable.

The easiest way to destroy stones and jade is to crush them, but extremely high temperatures will also do the job, so to burn jade and stone means to destroy them. The idiom means “the destruction of both good and bad alike,” “to destroy indiscriminately.”

It is the job of lawmakers to vet bills and funding requests and to approve only the worthy ones. But using filibustering to render the council inoperable is “玉石俱焚” (yu4 shi2 ju4 fen2), as no item, however, worthy and urgent, can be approved.

Terms containing the character “焚” (fen2) include:

焚燒 (fen2 shao1) – to burn

焚毀 (fen2 hui3) – to destroy by fire

自焚 (zi4 fen2) – to burn oneself to death; self-immolation

焚化爐 (fen2 hua4 lu2) – an incinerator