

# 危言聳聽

*wei1 yan2 song3 ting1*

Much of Hong Kong, along with the rest of other coastal cities in the world, will be under water if mankind carries on spewing greenhouse gas at the present level for another 200 years, as global warming causes sea levels to rise. That is the warning from US research group Climate Central.

The prediction is scientific, no doubt, but long-term projections have a way of missing their mark. However, talk about the local cultural center and the Tsim Sha Tsui clock tower all going under the sea together with half the population is alarming. Some may even think it is “危言聳聽” (*wei1 yan2 song3 ting1*).

“危” (*wei1*) is “danger” and “言” (*yan2*) is “speech,” “words.” Put together “危言” means “shocking words,” “shocking statement.” “聳” (*song3*) is “lofty” or “to startle,” “to shock.” “聽” (*ting1*) is “to listen,” “to hear.” Literally, “危言聳聽” (*wei1 yan2 song3 ting1*) is “shocking words shocking to hear.”

## Idiom by Lon Yan

It means “alarmist talk,” “an alarming story.” When people “say frightening things just to raise alarm,” “exaggerate things just to scare people,” “use lofty words to excite one to listen” or “stir up others with sensational statements,” we call it “危言聳聽.”

But accurate or otherwise, the warning reminds us that our action today may bring dire consequences to future generations. We may still change our ways to forestall the dreaded scenarios. So the warning can be described as “當頭棒喝” (*dang1 tou2 bang4 he4*) – a direct, sharp and timely one to wake us up from error.

**Terms containing the character “危” (*wei1*) include:**

危險 (*wei1 xian3*) – danger, dangerous

危機 (*wei1 ji1*) – a crisis

危害 (*wei1 hai4*) – to harm

危急 (*wei1 ji2*) – urgent, critical (situation)