

無可厚非

wu2 ke3 hou4 fei1

Chief executive Leung Chun-ying went to help pick up garbage at a Lantau beach with a team of officials. Some called the exercise a show, noting that real cleaners had already removed most of the garbage beforehand, leaving just enough behind for the officials to pick up in front of news cameras.

Critics said the garbage was carried to Hong Kong from the mainland by sea currents, and the government could have done better by coming up with a real solution.

Leung was singled out in particular for wearing work gloves and using tongs, which, it was said, made him look insincere.

But at least Leung did not cover himself up top to bottom like you know who during an official photo op when the SARS epidemic hit Hong Kong.

Even cleaners wear protective gloves for hygiene purposes. And it is really “無可厚非” (wu2 ke3 hou4 fei1) that Leung did the same.

“無” (wu2) is “without,” “nil,” “nothing,” “可” (ke3)

Idiom by Lon Yan

“can,” “may,” “厚” (hou4) is “thick,” “deep” and “非” (fei1) “to blame,” “to censure.” Literally, “無可厚非” (wu2 ke3 hou4 fei1) is “nothing deserves one to lay blame on thick.” It means “to give no cause for much criticism,” “no serious mistakes committed.”

The idiom is used mostly in situations when someone has done something that is not entirely proper but cannot be considered a serious mistake.

If an official falls asleep at a meeting because he or she has worked overnight on an emergency situation, we can say it is “無可厚非” (wu2 ke3 hou4 fei1). You can also use the idiom to defend someone who is being criticized for a minor or trivial transgression.

Terms containing the character “無” (wu2) include:

無知 (wu2 zhi1) – ignorant

無奈 (wu2 nai4) – helpless

無法 (wu2 fa3) – unable; incapable

無私 (wu2 si1) – unselfish