

# Idiom by Lon Yan

## 大功告成

**da4 gong1 gao4 cheng2**

The Hong Kong Government and the Jockey Club paid HK\$10 billion for the reconstruction of Sichuan after a deadly earthquake there in 2008 and the works are finally done. Announcing this on his blog, Secretary for Development Paul Chan Mo-po used the idiom “大功告成” (da4 gong1 gao4 cheng2).

“大” (da4) is “big,” “sizable;” “功” (gong1) “merit,” “achievement;” “work;” “task;” “告” (gao4) “to tell;” “to announce;” “be;” “reported to be” and “成” (cheng2) “to succeed;” “to finish;” “accomplished;” “completed.” “大功” (da4 gong1) is “great merit;” “extraordinary service;” “great service” and “告成” (gao4 cheng2) is “to announce the completion of something important.”

Literally, “大功告成” (da4 gong1 gao4 cheng2) is “the great task has been completed.” It means “final completion of a task;” “successfully accomplished (project or

goal);” “to be highly successful.”

People often say “大功告成” (da4 gong1 gao4 cheng2) when they have finished a big project, especially one that is challenging.

Sichuan rehabilitation certainly qualified as it took eight years and comprised a total of 183 items in education, medical and social welfare. It also involved the rebuilding of the Wolong National Nature Reserve, a conversation area for giant pandas, as well as two roads through hazardous terrains with the associated bridges and tunnels.

While the idiom refers to “大功” (da4 gong1) – “big or great task” – its usage is not strictly reserved for works that are great or even big. People often exclaimed “大功告成!” (da4 gong1 gao4 cheng2) upon completion of a task, be they big or small, much like saying “It’s done!”

### Terms containing the character “成” (cheng2) include:

成功 (cheng2 gong1) – success; to succeed

成績 (cheng2 ji4) – results; achievements

成長 (cheng2 zhang3) – to grow up

成熟 (cheng2 shu2) – ripe; mellow; mature