

Idiom by Lon Yan

撥亂反正

bo1 luan4 fan3 zheng4

The Hong Kong International Airport fully launched its HK\$1.56 billion new air traffic control system in mid-November, and there have been endless problems. Plane that were there disappeared from radar screens. Planes that were not there appeared on the screens, causing false collision alarms.

Despite assurances from the Civil Aviation Department that these were nothing more than teething problems, the problems continued unabated, and have apparently gotten worse.

As the Director of Civil Aviation related officials confidently assured the public that all was safe, the system acted up again and flights had to be grounded.

There are, of course, urgent calls for the authorities to do everything possible and without delay to “撥亂反正” (*bo1 luan4 fan3 zheng4*).

“撥” (*bo1*) is “to poke,” “to stir,” “to push

aside with the hand or a stick,” “亂” (*luan4*) “disorder,” “chaos,” “反” (*fan3*) is “to turn over,” “reverse,” and “正” (*zheng4*) “correct,” “right.”

Literally, “撥亂反正” (*bo1 luan4 fan3 zheng4*) is “push aside chaos to restore order.” It means “to bring order out of chaos,” “to clarify confusion and bring things back to order,” “to clear up what has been confounded and set things right,” “to put down rebellion and restore order.”

When things goes wrong, we should of course “撥亂反正” (*bo1 luan4 fan3 zheng4*) as soon as possible.

This is especially so when what is “亂” (*luan4*) is the air traffic control system of an airport as busy as the one in Hong Kong. Planes could crash and lives would be lost. So we must “撥亂反正” (*bo1 luan4 fan3 zheng4*) without delay.

Terms containing the character “亂” (*luan4*) include:

亂世 (*luan4 shi4*) – troubled times

亂來 (*luan4 lai2*) – to act foolishly or recklessly

搗亂 (*dao3 luan4*) – to make trouble

胡亂 (*hu2 luan4*) – carelessly