

Idiom by Lon Yan

假手於人

jia3 shou3 yu2 ren2

The death of a runner who collapsed during the Xiamen International Half-Marathon has exposed rampant cheating in such events.

The deceased was found to be a “proxy runner” who was running in the name of someone else. Further investigation discovered 30 other proxy runners in the race.

The proxies get a fee of 200 to 300 yuan per race, and are said to be in great demand, as people hire them to get “national-class” results, which help with their application for a university place.

Those who use proxy runners can be said to be “假手於人” (*jia3 shou3 yu2 ren2*).

“假” (*jia3*) is “fake,” “false,” “手” (*shou3*) “a hand,” “假手” (*jia3 shou3*) can mean “a prosthetic hand,” but is in the idiom,

it means “to do something through somebody else.” “於” (*yu2*) “in,” “at,” “by” and “人” (*ren2*) “people,” “others,” “other people.”

“假手於人” (*jia3 shou3 yu2 ren2*) means “to do something by means of an agent,” “by proxy,” “acting via somebody else.”

“假手於人” (*jia3 shou3 yu2 ren2*) is not necessary wrong. Shareholders of a company who are unable to attend a general meeting may “假手於人” (*jia3 shou3 yu2 ren2*) to vote – vote by proxy.

Running a marathon does not involve the hands – “手” (*shou3*) – but the legs – “腳” (*jiao3*), but having someone run for you is still “假手於人” (*jia3 shou3 yu2 ren2*) and not “假腳於人” (*jia3 jiao3 yu2 ren2*) as there is no such idiom.

Terms containing the character “假” (*jia3*) include:

假設 (*jia3 she4*) – to suppose; to assume; to presume

假裝 (*jia3 zhuang1*) – to feign; to pretend

假髮 (*jia3 fa4*) – a wig

假期 (*jia4 qi1*) – a holiday; a vacation