

Idiom by Lon Yan

弄虛作假

nong4 xu1 zuo4 jia3

A highways official told lawmakers that more than 200 concrete specimen tests have been falsified by the contractor of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (港珠澳大橋).

Speaking at the Legco Panel on Transport special meeting, Director of Highways, Daniel Chung Kum-wah, said 210 samples could be fake, and 203 locations have been confirmed. A total of 159 are at stress-critical locations – 10 in buildings, 29 in tunnels, 28 on the bridge, and 47 in other structures. The official's report was basically about conducts of “弄虛作假” (*nong4 xu1 zuo4 jia3*).

“弄” (*nong4*) is “to play or trifle with,” “to do,” “make,” “虛” (*xu1*) “false,” “unreal,” “deceptive,” “unfounded,” “groundless,” “作” (*zuo2*) “to make,” “to pretend,” “to effect,” “to act,” and “假” (*jia3*) “fake,” “false.” “虛假” (*xu1 jia3*) means “false,” “sham,” “dishonest.”

Literally, “弄虛作假” (*nong4 xu1 zuo4 jia3*) is “playing with fakeness and making falsity,” “to practice fraud.” The idiom means “to play tricks,” “to resort to deceit,” “by trickery.”

“弄虛作假” (*nong4 xu1 zuo4 jia3*) can be used to describe all kinds of lies and deceptions, like a company presenting false accounts to shareholders, or engineers making up test reports.

The idiom is used quite frequently by the media. Sing Tao Daily, for example, used it in recent reports about shenanigans behind film awards to mainland artistes, immigration scams in Canada and overstated economic figures in Liaoning.

People who “弄虛作假” (*nong4 xu1 zuo4 jia3*), in whatever form, has only one purpose – to deceive others.

Terms containing the character “虛” (*xu1*) include:

虛偽 (*xu1 wei3*) – hypocritical; false

虛弱 (*xu1 ruo4*) – weak; feeble; debilitated

虛報 (*xu1 bao4*) – to make a false report

虛心 (*xu1 xin1*) – modest and open-minded; with a guilty conscience