

Idiom by Lon Yan

反口覆舌

fan3 kou3 fu4 she2

An Urban Renewal Authority redevelopment project at the "Sports Shoes Street" in Mong Kok was supposed to have a "sports hall of fame" and a "garden in the sky."

But when the building was finished, these facilities for public enjoyment were missing. The media accused the authority of "走數" (*zou3 shu4*), a colloquial term which means "running away from one's debts," "to refuse to pay a debt," "to go back on one's words."

Another colorful Cantonese expression that can be used is "反口覆舌" (*fan3 kou3 fu4 she2*).

"反" (*fan3*) is "contrary," "opposite," "to turn over," "in reverse," "口" (*kou3*) "the mouth," "覆" (*fu4*) "to turn upside down," "to overturn," "to topple," "to capsize," and "舌" (*she2*) "the tongue." Literally, "反口覆舌" (*fan3 kou3 fu4*

she2) is "turn over the mouth and tongue." It means "not to keep one's words," "break one's promise," "deny one's word."

When someone goes back on his or her words you can express your dismay by saying: "Why do you "反口覆舌" (*fan3 kou3 fu4 she2*)?"

In response to the criticisms, the authority explained that the two facilities had to be dropped when the plans were revised due to changes to planning standards and building height regulations.

A related idiom is "出爾反爾" (*chu1 er3 fan3 er3*) - "to renege on one's words," "to reverse one's position."

Another idiom that refers to the mouth and the tongue is "貧嘴薄舌", meaning "garrulous" (喋喋不休的) and "sharp-tongued" (說話尖刻的).

Terms containing the character "覆" (*fu4*) include:

覆蓋 (*fu4 gai4*) – to cover

覆核 (*fu4 he2*) – to re-check; to review

覆審 (*fu4 shen3*) – a retrial

覆沒 (*fu4 mo4*) – to capsize and sink; annihilated