

尋根究底

xun2 gen1 jiu1 di3

Drinking water at a few public housing estates was found to contain excessive (過量的、超標的) lead. The revelation shocked the town.

In order to deal with the crisis, a few investigations have been launched. Apart from the reviews by the Water Supplies Department (水務署) and the Housing Authority (房屋委員會), chief executive Leung Chun-ying has also launched a commission of inquiry.

The key question to be answered is, of course, how the contamination (污染) occurred and what parties should be held responsible. These various investigations have a common goal, and that is to “尋根究底” (*xun2 gen1 jiu1 di3*) and find the truth.

“尋” (*xun2*) is to look for, to search, “根” (*gen1*) means the roots of a plant, “究” (*jiu1*) is to probe

Idiom by Lon Yan

and “底” (*di3*) means the bottom, the base.

Literally, 尋根究底 (*xun2 gen1 jiu1 di3*) is “search roots, probe bottom”. It means to investigate a matter until the cause of it is found; to look hard until the truth is revealed.

It is the equivalent of the English expression “get to the bottom of (something)” which is to find an explanation for a mystery or happening that is not readily understandable.

It also means to search for the origin, cause, root or source of an occurrence.

尋根究底 (*xun2 gen1 jiu1 di3*) is also the attitude of serious student. We can say that “The scholar will always 尋根究底 and will not give up until he finds all the answers to his questions.”

尋覓 (*xun2 mi4*) or 尋找 (*xun2 zhao3*) means to look for, 尋求 (*xun2 qiu2*) is to seek, and 尋短見 (*xun2 duan3 jian4*) has the ominous meaning of “try to commit suicide.”