Idiom by Lon Yan

The people of Hong Kong love hairy crabs, but only as a delicacy and not for the connotation of their name. Hairy crabs are called “大閘蟹” (da4 zha2 xie4). The poor crustaceans are tied up tightly for easy transportation. People who bought shares that have fallen greatly in value are called “大閘蟹” (da4 zha2 xie4) as they can’t sell them without suffering painful losses hence their capital is tied up, like the crabs.

Hairy crabs are also not usually associated with beautiful women. But a hairy crab trader is organizing a beauty pageant to select a Miss Hairy Crab. Though the contestants are rather pretty, netizens just couldn’t help poking fun at the unusual title. Some asked whether the winner can “打橫行” (da3 heng2 xing2) like a crab.

“打橫行” (da3 heng2 xing2) or simply “橫行” (heng2 xing2) means walking sideways. Normal people walk in a straight line. If you walk sideways on a busy street, you will bump into people. People who “打橫行” (da3 heng2 xing2) have no regard for others, so they are bullies.

The idiom that describes such obnoxious conduct is “橫行無忌” (heng2 xing2 wu2 ji4). “橫” (heng2) is “horizontal,” “across,” “行” (xing2) “walk,” “無” (wu2) “without,” “nil,” “none” and “忌” (ji4) “fear.” Literally, “橫行無忌” (heng2 xing2 wu2 ji4) is “walking sideways no fear.” It means “to run amok,” “to run wild.” A similar idiom is “橫行霸道” (heng2 xing2 ba4 dao4), to “to ride roughshod,” “to tyrannize (over),” “to be domineering,” “to play the bully.”

Terms containing the character “橫” (heng2) include:

- 橫樑 (heng2 liang2) – a cross beam
- 橫豎 (heng2 shu4) – any way; in any case
- 專橫 (zhuo4 heng2) – domineering
- 橫洲 (heng2 zhou1) – Wang Chau (a place in Yuen Long)