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 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.”