

強人所難

qiang2 ren2 suo3 nan2

Do you support Hong Kong or China? This is a question that has come back to haunt Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying again and again.

People jumped on Leung for being equivocal in his “loyalty” between the home team and their national counterparts in the Fifa World Cup qualifiers a few months ago.

When he went on a radio talk show to elaborate on his policy address recently, a caller put the question to him again. And to Leung, it must be a typical case of “強人所難” (*qiang2 ren2 suo3 nan2*).

“強” (*qiang2*) means “to compel,” “to force,” “人” (*ren2*) “people,” “other people,” “所” (*suo3*) “that which,” and “難” (*nan2*) “difficult,” “hardship.” Literally, “強人所難” (*qiang2 ren2 suo3 nan2*) “force people into hardship,” “to force people into difficulties.”

The idiom means “to impose a difficult task on

Idiom by Lon Yan

someone,” “to put someone into a difficult position,” “to force others to do something hard.”

So Leung again muttered something about the real opponents are the teams from other countries, that Hong Kong is a part of China, that one can support both the local and the national teams, and whether he can just stop talking about it.

What can you expect him to say? It's like when the wife asks: “If your mother and I both fall into the sea, who would you save first?” It is a “強人所難” (*qiang2 ren2 suo3 nan2*) question to stir trouble and to which there is no right answer, except perhaps to say: “I'll jump in and we all die together!”

Terms containing the character “強” (*qiang2*) include:

強調 (*qiang2 diao4*) – to stress

強迫 (*qiang3 po4*) – to compel, to force

強硬 (*qiang2 ying4*) – unyielding

強盜 (*qiang2 dao4*) – a bandit