

寶刀未老

bao3 dao1 wei4 lao3

There are large billboards along highways in Ontario, Canada, that warn of speeding fines of up to \$10,000 for the most blatant speedster. That is, of course, in Canadian dollars, which work out to about HK\$61,000. New laws have also been introduced to take away not only the licenses, but also the cars, of serious offenders.

But some drivers continue to treat the roads like a racing track. Since there is no age limit on idiocy, there are some very old offenders too.

Recently, police spotted a car doing 161 km/hr on a highway with a speed limit of 100km/hr. When they pulled the car over, they found the driver old enough to be their granddad, or even great-granddad. The motorist turned out to be 85, and became the oldest man to be caught under the new speeding law. His license was immediately taken away, as was his Oldsmobile.

This kind of driver is a menace on the roads, but he might boast to his friend that he was “寶刀

Idiom by Lon Yan

未老” (*bao3 dao1 wei4 lao3*).

“寶” (*bao3*) is “treasure,” “precious,” “刀” (*dao1*) “knife,” “sword,” “未” (*wei4*) means “not,” “not yet” and “老” (*lao3*) “aged,” “old,” “outdated.” Literally, “寶刀未老” (*bao3 dao1 wei4 lao3*) is “precious sword not yet old,” “The man may be old, but not his sword.”

The idiom means “to maintain one’s strength and skills even when advanced in age.” But its usage is not confined to old people. “寶刀未老” (*bao3 dao1 wei4 lao3*) is generally used to describe, or compliment, people who have not lost their brilliance or skills even after a long time has passed.

Terms containing the character “寶” (*bao3*) include:

寶貴 (*bao3 gui4*) – valuable; precious

寶石 (*bao3 shi2*) – a precious stone; a gem

寶藏 (*bao3 zang4*) – a treasure house

珠寶 (*zhu1 bao3*) – jewelry