

# Idiom by Lon Yan

## 稍縱即逝

*shao1 zong4 ji2 shi4*

Is it wise to spend all our time and energy engaging in political bickering?

Some would obviously said yes, as that is what they have been doing every day. Some politicians have even made a career of it. Others would prefer to work on things they consider more important, like building up the territory, maintaining our competitiveness, and improving the lives of the people.

National People's Congress chairman Zhang Dejiang, the state leader in charge of Hong Kong and Macau affairs, clearly took the latter position, warning that the SAR could be overtaken by Shenzhen in two years if we keep on wasting energy on politics.

How we ended up being threatened by Shenzhen that was still a "small fishing village" three decades ago when Hong Kong was already one of the four Asian tigers, is a

question that is worth a lot of soul searching for Hongkongers.

Zhang said this is a crucial time in Hong Kong's development and that the opportunity is one that is "稍縱即逝" (*shao1 zong4 ji2 shi4*).

"稍" (*shao1*) is "slightly," "a little," "縱" (*zong4*) "to let go," "to set free," "即" (*ji2*) "promptly," "immediately," "now" and "逝" (*shi4*) "to die," "to pass." "稍縱即逝" (*shao1 zong4 ji2 shi4*), literally, is "to let go slight and gone immediately."

It is a reminder that opportunities do not come often, and when they come, we can't afford to wait but seize them. "稍縱即逝" (*shao1 zong4 ji2 shi4*) is an advice to "take full advantage of life's opportunities whenever and wherever they present themselves," "to live to one's full potential."

### Terms containing the character "即" (*ji2*) include:

即時 (*ji2 shi2*) – immediately; forthwith; at once

即將 (*ji2 jiang1*) – shortly; imminent; to be about to

即使 (*ji2 shi3*) – even; even if

即興 (*ji2 xing4*) – impromptu