

Idiom by Lon Yan

江郎才盡

jiang1 lang2 cai2 jin4

With parent company Wharf deciding not to further fund it, and having incurred substantial loss over many years, Hong Kong Cable Television is facing a grim future.

The service, running since 1993, had profitable days. But a host of factors put pressure on its bottom line in recent years, and just trying to balance the books has been an uphill battle.

The struggling station has failed to find a buyer and in what must be a last ditch attempt to save it from closure, it has formed a committee to look for alternative capital.

But the possibility of the station closing in a matter of months is very real. One cannot help but feel that it is finding itself “江郎才盡” (*jiang1 lang2 cai2 jin4*) in coming up with feasible options.

“江” (*jiang1*) is “a river,” “the surname Jiang;” “郎” (*lang2*), “a young man;” “江郎” (*jiang1 lang2*) refers to Jiang Yan, a poet in the Southern Dynasty of China, “才” (*cai2*) “ability;” “talent;” and “盡” (*jin4*) “exhausted;” “finished;” “to use up;” “to exhaust.”

Literally, “江郎才盡” (*jiang1 lang2 cai2 jin4*) is “Jiang Yan has exhausted his talent.” It means “to have used up one’s literary talent or energy;” “writer whose creative powers are exhausted;” “the inspiration has dried up” and “to have used up one’s creative powers;” “talent has run out.”

The sad fact is that when the operating environment is impossible, no amount of talent or creativity on the part of the management could keep a business going.

Terms containing the character “盡” (*jin4*) include:

盡力 (*jin4 li4*) – to try one’s best; to spare no efforts

盡責 (*jin4 ze2*) – to do one’s duty

盡快 (*jin3 kuai4*) – as soon as possible; as quickly as possible

盡人事 (*jin4 ren2 shi4*) – to do what one can (with little hope of succeeding)