

Idiom by Lon Yan

直斥其非

zhi2 chi4 qi2 fei1

Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying said air pollution in Hong Kong and Guangdong is a two-way street, depending which way the wind is blowing the pollutants. But former Hong Kong Observatory director Lee Boon-ying called such saying “unscientific.”

He wrote in a blog: “The conditions for Hong Kong smog to go to Guangdong are hardly probable. It is difficult to support such claims,” adding “The government does not value science and it lacks common scientific knowledge.” We can call Lee’s approach “直斥其非” (*zhi2 chi4 qi2 fei1*).

“直” (*zhi2*) is “frank,” “straightforward,” “direct,” “straight,” “斥” (*chi4*) “to scold,” “to reprimand,” “其” (*qi2*) “that,” “that person’s,” “his,” “her,” and “非” (*fei1*) “wrong,” “an error.” Literally, “直斥其非” (*zhi2 chi4 qi2 fei1*) is “directly scolding that person for his error.”

It means “to reprimand another in a straightforward manner”, “directly scolding another person for his or her mistake.”

When children make mistakes, adults would usually “直斥其非” (*zhi2 chi4 qi2 fei1*). Being direct is probably a better way of educating a children, but children are also quite defenseless in front of an irate adult.

Government officials these days are quite used to “直斥其非” (*zhi2 chi4 qi2 fei1*) as they would invariably get a heavy dose of it from some lawmakers every time they go to a Legislative Council meeting.

But “直斥其非” (*zhi2 chi4 qi2 fei1*) may be considered blunt and tactless. So when your boss makes a mistake, you may not want to “直斥其非” (*zhi2 chi4 qi2 fei1*) as it could cost you your job.

Terms containing the character “非” (*fei1*) include:

非常 (*fei1 chang2*) – unusual; extraordinary; very

非法 (*fei1 fa3*) – illegal

非凡 (*fei1 fan2*) – outstanding; unusually good

非洲 (*fei1 zhou1*) – Africa