

# Idiom by Lon Yan

## 新瓶舊酒

*xin1 ping2 jiu4 jiu3*

Incoming Chief Executive Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor's new administrative team has just been approved by the central government, and there was only one new face among her 21 top officials.

Only former Democratic Party member Law Chi-kwong, who will become Labor and Welfare Secretary, is coming from outside the government. Other cabinet members are either existing ones, or promoted from within the ranks of the civil service.

Democratic Party chairman Wu Chi-wai doubted whether Lam can implement a new style of governance as promised by inheriting cabinet ministers from the Leung Chun-ying administration, saying "If the government's style doesn't change, it will be of little help."

The idiom "新瓶舊酒" (*xin1 ping2 jiu4 jiu3*) comes to mind.

"新" (*xin1*) is "new," "up-to-date," "瓶"

(*ping2*) "a bottle," "a vase," "舊" (*jiu4*) "old," "past," "former," and "酒" (*jiu3*) "wine," "liquor." Literally, "新瓶舊酒" (*xin1 ping2 jiu4 jiu3*) is "new bottle old wine," "old wine in new bottle."

The idiom means "the outside is different, but the inside is the same," "changes in appearance only," "nothing's changed except the look."

It has a negative meaning that nothing substantial has been added, and that changes are superficial. Saying that a creative work is "新瓶舊酒" (*xin1 ping2 jiu4 jiu3*) means it comprises only of old ideas even if the format is different, which is not meant to flatter.

Addressing comments that her cabinet slate has no pleasant surprises, Lam said it also means that there are no nasty surprises. In fact, not all things new are good. Having people with experience would ensure stability.

### Terms containing the character "舊" (*jiu4*) include:

舊時 (*jiu4 shi2*) – old times; old days

舊事 (*jiu4 shi4*) – old affair; former matter; old topic

念舊 (*nian4 jiu4*) – to remember old friends; to cherish old friendship

陳舊 (*chen2 jiu4*) – outmodes; old-fashioned