

Idiom by Lon Yan

背道而馳

bei4 dao4 er2 chi2

Electric cars are good as they are clean. So the government decided many years ago to get people to change to electric cars, targeting to switch one third of private cars in Hong Kong to electric ones by 2020. It also aimed to make Hong Kong “one of the cities in Asia where electric vehicles are most widely used.”

Seeing official enthusiasm, people started to buy electric cars, and their number grew more than 150 times, from 69 in 2011 to over 10,000 now.

Electric cars run on batteries, and batteries need to be recharged, or the vehicles won't go anywhere. The problem is when it comes to developing recharging facilities, the government hasn't been as keen. Public recharging facilities only increased from 872 in 2011 to 1,518 in 2016, less than double.

The government has also cancelled the electric car first registration tax waiver, an

incentive for wider electric car use that had been implemented for years.

What the government is doing is “背道而馳” (*bei4 dao4 er2 chi2*) with its stated objective of promoting electric car usage, and the Ombudsman has started an investigation on this matter.

“背” (*bei4*) is “to go back on,” “the reverse side,” “道” (*dao4*) “a road,” “a path,” “a course,” “a method,” “a way,” “而” (*er2*) “to,” and “馳” (*chi2*) “to speed,” “to run,” “run fast.” Literally, “背道而馳” (*bei4 dao4 er2 chi2*) is “to run fast in the opposite direction,” “to speed in reverse.”

The idiom means “to proceed in opposite directions,” to be diametrically opposed to,” “to run (or go) counter to,” “to diverge from.”

Terms containing the character “背” (*bei4*) include:

背景 (*bei4 jing3*) – background

背叛 (*bei4 pan4*) – to betray

背脊 (*bei4 ji3*) – the back of the human body

背黑鍋 (*bei1 hei1 guo1*) – to be unjustly blamed; to be made a scapegoat