

Idiom by Lon Yan

好景不長

hao3 jing3 bu4 chang2

Flipping iPhones, apparently, is not lucrative anymore. Parallel traders said the Apple's 10th anniversary iPhone X has failed to excite the market, and the markup was as little as a few hundred dollars, which was hardly even worth the trouble.

In the early days, speculators could earn a fortune. When the iPhone 4 was released in 2010, traders could sell it for as much as 82 percent higher than the official price, so did the 2013 iPhone 5, which fetched prices at double the official one.

But with assurances of a steady supply of the iPhone X in the mainland, retailers need not buy phones in Hong Kong, the grey market collapsed, with one shop asking only HK\$10,500 for the 256GB iPhone X in black, a mere HK\$612 above the retail price.

To the traders, it is clearly a case of “好景不長” (*hao3 jing3 bu4 chang2*).

“好” (*hao3*) is “good,” “fine,” “景” (*jing3*) “a view,” “a sight,” “scenery,” “circumstances,” “condition,” “不” (*bu4*) “no,” “not,” and “長” (*chang2*) “long.” “好景” (*hao3 jing3*) is “good conditions.” “好景不長” (*hao3 jing3 bu4 chang2*), literally, is “good conditions do not last long.”

The idiom means “a good thing doesn't last forever,” “good times don't last long,” “a sweet dream is short-lived.” Hairy crab traders are also lamenting “好景不長” (*hao3 jing3 bu4 chang2*), as their billion-dollar business is in limbo because of food-safety problems this year.

The idiom is used to describe a change of circumstances for the worst, whether it is in business or other aspects of life.

Terms containing the character “長” (*chang2*) include:

長期 (*chang2 qi1*) – long-term

長久 (*chang2 jiu3*) – for a long time; permanently

長遠 (*chang2 yuan3*) – long-term; long range

長短 (*chang2 duan3*) – length; good and bad; strong and weak points