Three teenagers took an expensive car for a joyride (開偷來的車兜風) around San Po Kong and ended up being arrested. They faced various charges including “taking a conveyance (交通工具) without authority” as well as driving without insurance (保險) or license.

The word “joyride” means taking a ride in a car, and it usually means a stolen one. It is actually something of a misnomer (用詞不當). While there might be an element of “joy” in the ride, taking a vehicle illegally usually does not end well.

The youngsters’ predicament can best be described as “樂極生悲” (le4 ji2 sheng1 bei1). “樂” (le4) is “happiness,” “joy”, “極” (ji2) means “the extreme,” “the utmost,” “生” (sheng1) is “to born,” “to produce,” and “悲” (bei1) is “sorrow,” “sadness.” Literally, “樂極生悲” (le4 ji2 sheng1 bei1) is “extreme happiness produces sorrow.”

It means “extreme pleasure is followed by sorrow,” or “joy gives place to sorrow.” It is used to describe a situation when an event or experience that starts out as pleasurable ends badly, or even disastrously (災難性地).

The idiom also alludes to the observation that when the pendulum of things swings to its highest point on one end, it must swing back. We can take it as advice not to push anything to the extreme.

If a friend is enjoying an activity so much that he or she is forgetting about safety, you may say, “Beware of 樂極生悲 (le4 ji2 sheng1 bei1)!”

Terms containing the character “極” (ji2) include:

- 極權 (ji2 quan2) - absolute power, dictatorial powers, totalitarian rule
- 極好 (ji2 hao3) - extremely good, the best
- 極壞 (ji2 huai4) - extremely bad, the worst
- 北極 (bei3 ji2) - the North Pole