

Najib and Fan Zhong-yan
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Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak read out in Mandarin during Sunday's BN convention: "Xian tian xia zhi you er you, hou tian xia zhi le er le" (which means that one should first be worried about the country and be the last to enjoy after everyone else has rejoiced in enjoyment"), with the hope that this famous quote from Fan Zhong-yan would inspire BN leaders and members to place the interests of the nation above their own.

At the same time, thousands of people took part in the "return water rights to Selangor people" protest in another part of Kuala Lumpur, causing massive traffic jams in the city and inconveniencing many families on their weekend outings.

Whenever there are demonstrations in Kuala Lumpur, the traffic will be ground to a standstill, and if the protests have been initiated by the opposition, the traffic would be completely paralysed.

Of course some people would put the blame on the activists initiating the protest, but this was not the first time we had demonstrations. The authorities responsible for maintaining traffic did not plan alternative routes beforehand, resulting in people having to bear with nightmarish traffic even on an otherwise quiet Sunday.

It appears to me that the authorities are most definitely not the people "worried first about the country."

Perhaps our high-ranking officials and dignitaries have never tasted the bitterness of snarling traffic nor experienced the distress having to go through "endless turns and twists" during road closures in the city. They therefore do not have any idea how troubled the public would get in the face of really bad traffic, and we do not expect them to be excessively worried about the country more than themselves.

Fan Zhong-yan was a renowned statesman and writer during the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127). Although he hailed from an impoverished family, he studied very hard and cherished lofty political aspirations since he was young.

In his essay Yueyang Tower, he penned the time-honoured quote which implies that government officials should place national interests above their own interests, external appearances, gains, happiness or concerns.

Even though Fan was a senior official enjoying very handsome remunerations, he dug into his own pocket to help the poor, and had to lead a destitute life himself just because of this. Even in his old age he could not afford to build himself a decent mansion. His children and grandchildren also could not afford to give him a proper funeral after his death. Fan was indeed an honest and righteous man who dedicated his entire life to his country and people.

If Najib wanted BN leaders to emulate Fan Zhong-yan, he should have tried to make them understand the life and political thoughts of Fan thoroughly so that they could be "the first to be worried about the country and the last to enjoy."

Fan Zhong-yan was not held in high esteem because of the maxim he created, but the fact

that he spent his entire life practising what he had said. - mysinchew.com

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