

Taiwan Environment

Fu-Ya Wu

Basically, Taiwan belongs to one of the developed countries in our world. The development of an economy and a society is based on the conservation of its natural resources. In other words, social interaction and economies cannot continue to exist without maintaining the environment that supports such activities. This is the major issue when we talk about the environmental problems in Taiwan. Therefore, as the following I will talk about the influences of the environment of Taiwan after the so-called “development.”

Geologic ecology environment in Taiwan

Taiwan is located between the Philippine and Eurasian plate of the earth's surface. 73.6% of the plowland in Taiwan consists of mountains and hills, which came from up-thrust activities. The high-pitched land, the deep gullies, and varied topography has allowed for a wide variety of animals and vegetation to develop. This island is 144 km wide and 394 km long. Its 36,000 square kilometers is home to 36,000 species of plants and animals; including high altitude plants, which were left over from the ice age. 33% of those biological species are unique to Taiwan.

Taiwan's natural ecology is so immense that, several centuries ago, Dutch imperialists admiration of this island made them bestow the name “Formosa,” which means beautiful island. However, the current crisis of over-population and reckless treatment of a large portion of the land for towns, businesses, and farms has already destroyed and continues to threaten the existence of our fragile natural environment.

Mother Nature's Revenge

Our island, in the last 50 years, has experienced an economic miracle; even though the economic growth has been at the environment's expense. The 9-21 earthquake caused the exposure of a large amount of loose soil on the slopes. Also, after several downpours and typhoons, debris from soil erosion flowed down hills, causing serious landslides. The landslides in turn caused heavy losses of life and property. Mother nature's kickback exposed the fragility of Taiwan's environment. Expert research concluded: “The collapse and debris flow was caused by the interstitial terrace and soil looseness after 9-21 earthquake. But the main problem was due to excessive anthropogenic exploitation.”



In the past, the policy of land development was dictated solely by the economy. Industrial roads were allowed to go wherever industry liked; houses were built on watercourse areas; riverbeds were not even spared. What goes around comes around –one of Mother Nature's biggest whiplashes due to human activity on the isle started to take effect. The various Taiwan economic miracles that took 50 years to build could be altered easily by Nature. Her insistence to maintain balance and security for all life threatens us also; for we are but one of her children. Floods and droughts increase as human “development” increases, unless the development can be done harmoniously.

Is our environment sick? What are Taiwan's ecological problems?

Can Taiwan Endure Industrialization?

Improper policies and construction is the main reason a big calamity is about to come to domestic ecology:

1. Forest ecosystem: The excessive areas reclaimed and road building causes debris flow and large landslides. It seriously damages the forest ecosystem.
2. Rivers and streams ecosystem: After three decades of development, more than 70% rivers in Taiwan are polluted. Dams obstruct the flow of rivers and streams. Irrigation canals downstream alter natural river and stream distribution routes. These routes took thousands of years of careful carving by Mother Nature. Our relatively extreme abrupt alteration to the natural environment destroys her ecological structure.
3. Marshy ecosystem: Taiwan marshes are endangered due to congested soil deposits, wastewater pollution, and concrete construction.
4. Lakes and ponds ecosystem: The disappearance of gorge lakes and ponds causes floods and un-natural destruction of the ecology.
5. Estuarine and shore ecosystem: Severe water erosion and river embankments, and blocking rocks cause environmental damage.

Taiwan is unable to develop continuously without realizing how human beings & creatures co-exist forever. Our nightmares of floods, landslides, contaminated foods, and polluted air will not end until we learn to co-exist with our Mother. Taiwan can become the beautiful paradise she once was. She can become Formosa again.

