

Editorial

Earthquakes in Taiwan: Changes are Needed

Taiwan is located at the boundary of the Philippine Sea Plate and the Eurasian Plate, where earthquakes often occur. The movement of the two plates over time has formed the magnificent mountains in Taiwan, such as Mt. Jade and Mt. Sylvia. However, it has also caused devastating disasters. Taiwan is located on the “Ring of Fire” (also known as the Pacific Ring of Fire, the Rim of Fire, the Girdle of Fire or the Circum-Pacific belt), a region around much of the rim of the Pacific Ocean where many volcanic eruptions and earthquakes occur.

The 921 Earthquake in Taiwan, also known as the JiJi Earthquake (jǐ dìzhèn) on Tuesday, 21 September 1999 killed 2,417 people, left 29 people missing, injured 11,305 people and collapsed 51,711 houses. It was the worst natural disaster with the most casualties in Taiwan’s post-war period. In order to mourn the deaths of the earthquake and to warn people about the threat of earthquakes, the government established and held earthquake drills to ensure the protective measures can be taken in the event of disasters to minimize the possibility of casualties..

Recently, earthquakes centered in Taitung and Hualien occurred for three consecutive days. Due to these disastrous earthquakes, many buildings and bridges were destroyed. In the districts of Taitung (台東縣) and Hualien (花蓮縣), Luntian Bridge and Gaoliao Bridge fractured and three people were injured. Liushishi Mountain in the Coastal Mountain Range, and Chike Mountain in the East Rift Valley National Scenic Area suffered damages, and more than 400 people were trapped in the mountains on September 18th. Fortunately, they were rescued the next day. Some 7-11 stores and schools’ facilities were severely damaged, and they needed significant amounts of money to repair and maintain. During these quakes, 146 people were injured and one died. Over five hundred schools in Taiwan were damaged by the earthquakes. The Ministry of Education estimates that maintenance will require about 100,000,000NT\$.



Heavily damaged Guanghu Jr. High School in Wufeng (霧峰區) during the 921 earthquake.

The railways between Hualien and Taitung were also severely damaged. Fortunately, some railways have been repaired, but some railways have not been able to finish repairing. Some scholars predict that the next earthquake will occur at district of Chiayi and Tainan. The Taipei Times reported in an editorial written by Tsai Jr-keng on 24 September that “Earthquake response tips need updating.” Tsai stated that “Taiwanese might be especially attentive to the latest safety tips regarding earthquake readiness.” Tsai notes that while experts previously promoted a “triangle of life” method to survive an earthquake, that approach has been changed into a “drop, cover and hold” method. He says that people should “duck to the floor, cover their head and neck, and hold the position until the shaking stops.” This and other information should be updated by the government, and disseminated to the public. For example, using a wet towel to cover the face during a fire is no longer recommended. Other widely accepted protection methods are also out-of-date. One trainer in an earthquake seminar recommended “Run for the rooftop during an earthquake, and the ground during a fire.” In sum, Taiwan should provide grants to enterprises and individuals engaged in earthquake safety, and encourage people to participate in disaster relief volunteer training. The government needs to promote the latest disaster prevention information so that people can guard themselves during an earthquake. The government should develop earthquake safety training for the public, and professionalize the nation’s Disaster Relief Volunteer Corps. Some taken from the Taipei Times.

Taiwan's Plastic Restriction Policy



By Staff Writers Yiru Wang ,
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Taiwan is the country with the most widespread distribution of hand-held drinks. According to statistics, Taiwan's hand-held drink shops use more than two billion plastic cups every year. This brings up the question—do we know where these plastic cups go?



Although the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has engaged in resource recycling, due to the lack of suitable composting treatment facilities in Taiwan, Taiwan has chosen to destroy plastics by burning. This method cannot destroy plastics quickly or soundly, and some plastic wastes are discarded into the sea. That results in the problem of marine plastic waste becoming a more serious problem. Scholars estimate that worldwide there will be more garbage in the sea than fish in 2050. This large amount of plastic garbage will harm the marine ecology. The plastic particles are difficult to decompose and will enter the human body through the food chain, through which disposable plastic garbage is the most serious.



In order to effectively reduce the use of plastic, a new "Plastic Restriction Order" will be launched in Taiwan from July 2022. According to announcements from the EPA, chain beverage stores, convenience stores, fast food stores and supermarkets must ban plastic one-time drink cups. The draft also stipulates that convenience stores and fast food stores must provide circular cup borrowing services from New Year's Day 2023. The target must increase the number of outlets to at least 30% by 2025.

So far, chain operators have started to set up operations. McDonald's and Goodbox (好盒器) have cooperated to set up "Recycling Cup Rental Stations" in six stores in Taipei and Tainan.

From March to May this year, the number of borrowed cups grew from 1,900 to 2,200, and from June this year, the number of borrowed cups was 1,600. The usage rate is on a slight upward trend. As the use of recycled cups increases, you may wonder if there will be any recycling problems, but unexpectedly the return rate was as high as 99% during the trial period.

With the use of so much plastic, we have unknowingly become the killers of the environment. It may be difficult to heal, but we can improve our habits to mend this problem. The environment has an intimate relationship with people. We must take actions to protect the environment. The use of plastic must be reduced and controlled. Having the awareness of reducing the use of plastic, we will reduce harm to the environment.

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