

Natural disasters expose flawed land development plan

Following the disastrous Typhoon Herb of 1996 and the 921 earthquake of 1999, public criticism mounted on the national land development plan. A decade later, Typhoon Morakot and ensuing mudslides and massive flooding led to questions on competent agencies' responsibilities in assessing faults and flood tendency, considering geological conditions when devising land development plan, and introducing measures to respond to global climate change. Control Yuan Members launched an own-motion investigation and came up with the following findings.

Unpredictable as natural disasters are, their recurrence can be partly attributed to nonfeasance by responsible agencies at all levels. For purposes of consistency and enforcement, it is incumbent upon the Executive Yuan to ensure compliance by and coordination among its subordinate agencies. As basin governance requires inter-agency coordination, natural boundaries rather than administrative districts should be used to delegate responsibilities. The Executive Yuan is advised to draw reference from the experience of Murray–Darling Basin Authority in establishing a single competent agency or delegating the task of basin governance to regional government. According to Section 1 Article 47 of the Water Act, the authority-in-charge may revoke or restrict the approval granted to a water work, or order an alteration or demolition if necessary. The investigation found that the status of underground water conservation zone has failed to protect areas along the southwestern coast of Taiwan from excessive draining. Furthermore, Nantou County Government and other responsible agencies have been at fault for failing to identify and shut down unlicensed hotel businesses in central Taiwan. As a rule, aboriginal autonomous areas, traditional territory and maritime space should all be taken into account when defining administrative district and mapping land development. Responsible agencies are also encouraged to facilitate the passing of two drafts that involve autonomous region, territory and maritime space for aborigines.

A number of regulations have been drafted in response to Control Yuan's recommendations, including Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act by the Environmental Protection Agency; Land Development Act and Coastal Act by the Ministry of the Interior; Land Protection and Restoration Plan by the Council for Economic Planning and Development. In addition, the Ministry of the Interior has promised to focus on the standardization, sharing and application of data in order to continue to expand upon existing database and platform for exchanging land development information. The Ministry of Economic Affairs has set up a Subsidence Prevention Committee, while the Ministry of Transportation and Communications has set up a task group

monitoring potential subsidence along High Speed Rail tracks. Individuals held responsible for the case have been sent by Nantou County Government to district prosecutor's office. The draft for Aborigine Autonomy Act has been modified to specify autonomous regions and grant land proprietary and management to the aboriginal people.