E-Waste in Consumer Electronics

Media Flashes: Social and Economic Impact



INSIDE

Land of trash: Asia's recycling woes



Broad Context

- World Bank: 440 million tons of wasted generated across Asia every year. East Asia and the Pacific generate 270 million tons. Mainland China generates around 70% of the total.
- Across Asia, waste of all kinds is creating a crisis. Cities like Jakarta and Hong Kong are running out of space.
- Jakarta generates 10,000 tones of waste every day. Less than 2% is recycled. The equivalent of seven football fields of trash end up in the Ciliwung River every day.
- Hong Kong is modern but has virtually no effective recycling mechanism. Its landfills are also rapidly running out of space.

Lack of Awareness

- The lack of awareness of the problem or recycling is staggering.
- It is visible in developing countries like Indonesia, India and China but also in more developed economies like Hong Kong and Singapore.
- In Singapore, the domestic recycling rate fell to just 19% last year.
- Hong Kong's own recycling rate has been dropping steadily, in 2012 Hong Kong recycled 43% less than in 2010, just about 2.05 million tons.

Solutions

- In Hong Kong, recycling companies are looking to break even.
- In Philippines, Mother Earth Foundation, an NGO, has piloted zerowaste programs.
- In Malaysia, government put in place requirement that garbage be separated.
- South Korea and Japan are putting programs in place to bolter recycling.
- Taiwan has a 46% recycling rate since and started focusing on the issue in 1997.

E-Waste a Growing Concern

- People in Asia are rapid technology adopters. In 2011, China alone produced 160 million trash appliances, about 40% of what the U.S. produced.
- Greepeace: The concept of electronic recycling is not in the regional mindset.
- 2014: Asia generated 16 million tons of e-waste out of a global total of 72 million. China alone generated 6 million tons. Japan 2.2 million tons. India 1.7 million tons.

E-Waste a Growing Concern

- Electronic waste poses unknown hazards related to pollution and toxicity due to materials like lead, mercury, cadmium, arsenic and flame retardants. E-waste can also contain arsenic, beryllium, cadmium and polyvinyl chloride, to name just a few elements.
- An old cathode ray tube may contain up to 3kg of lead.
- There are as many as 60 different elements in electronic waste, according to StEP (Solving the E-Waste Problem), a UN initiative.

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