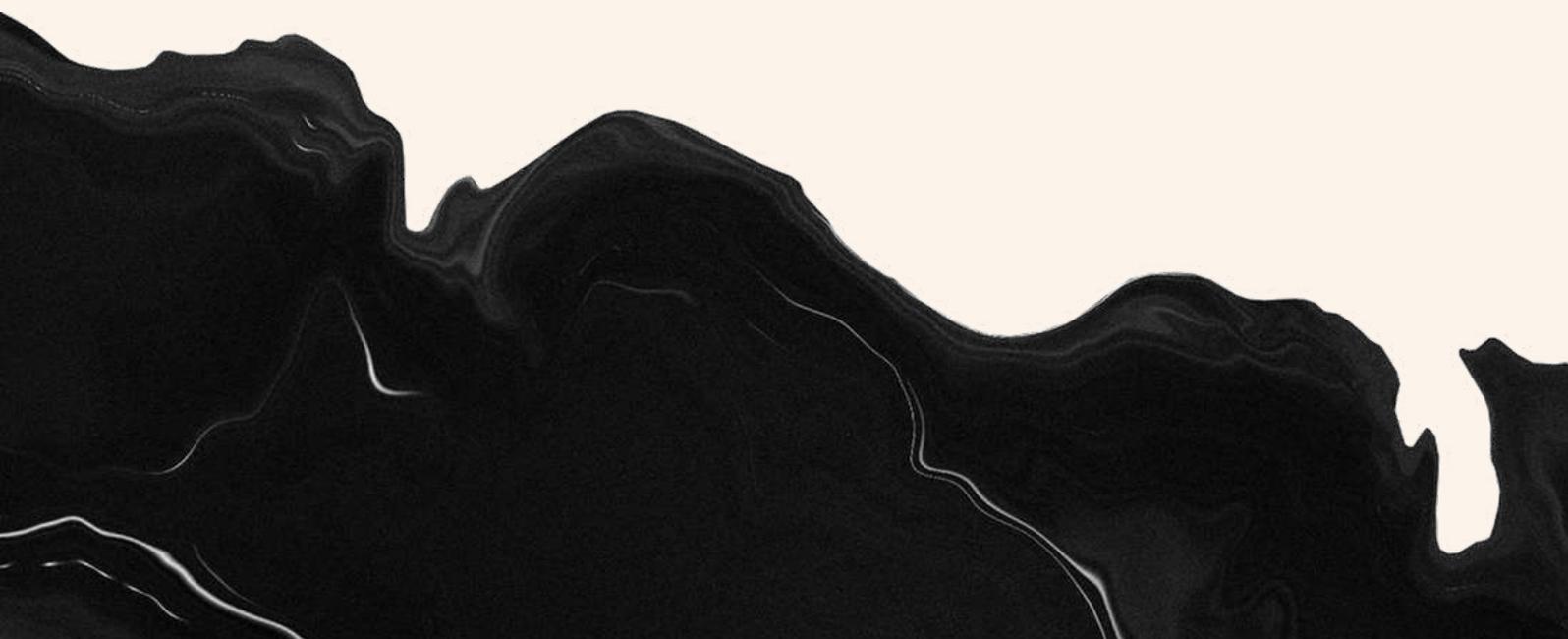


SOUTH ASIA QUARTERLY UPDATE

#25



VISION & MISSION

Vessels are recycled in facilities that ensure clean, safe, and just practices that provide workers with decent jobs. Vessels will be toxic-free and no longer cause harm to workers, local communities, or the environment at end-of-life.

To act as a catalyst for change by effectively advocating for clean, safe, and just ship recycling globally. This necessitates denouncing dirty and dangerous practices, such as the dumping of end-of-life vessels on the beaches of developing countries. Our commitment to finding sustainable global solutions is based on the respect of human and workers' rights and the principles of environmental justice, producer responsibility, 'polluter pays', and clean production.

APRIL 2021
SAQU #25

In this quarterly publication, we inform about the shipbreaking practices in South Asia, providing an overview of accidents that took place on the beaches of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, relevant press media as well as research. We aim to raise public awareness about the many negative impacts of shipbreaking in South Asia as well as developments aimed at the protection of workers' rights and the environment.



9

*workers suffered an accident
on South Asian
shipbreaking beaches*



76%

*of ships ended up on South
Asian beaches*

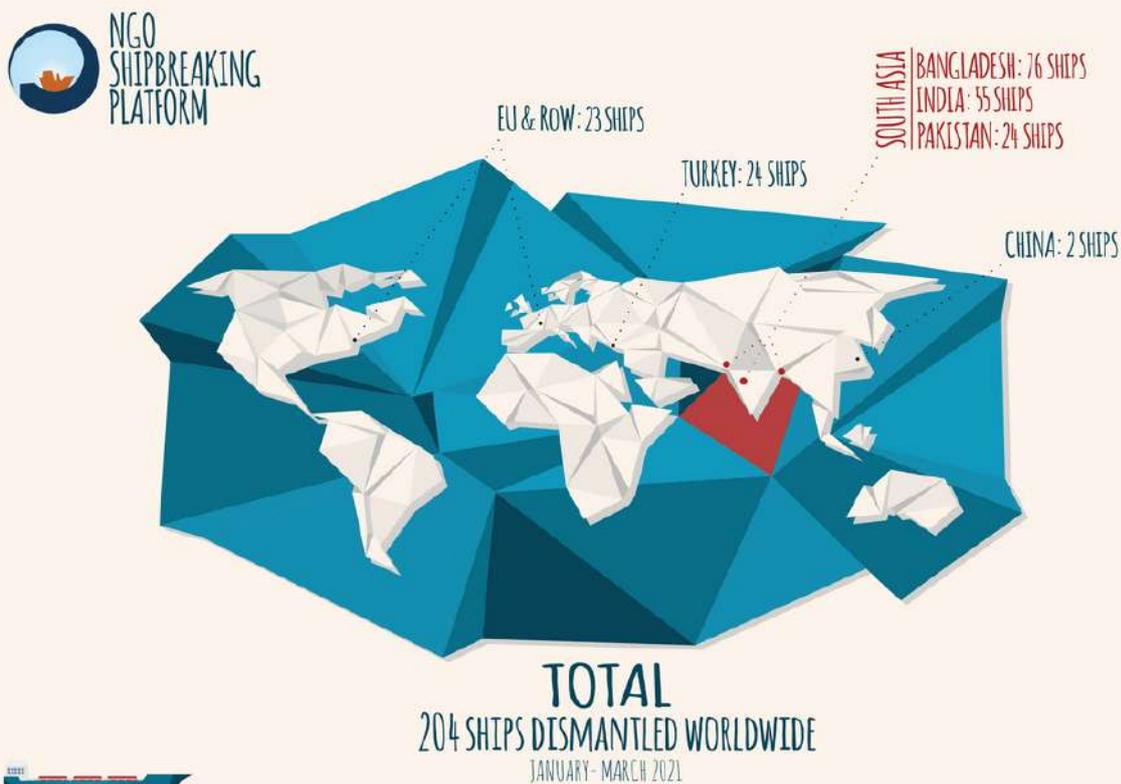
03

SHIPBREAKING RECORDS

There were a total of 204 ships broken in the first quarter of 2021. Of these, 155 ships were sold to the beaches of South Asia, where conditions are known to put workers' lives and the environment at risk.

Greek ship owners sold the most ships to South Asian yards, closely followed by Japanese, United Arab Emirates and South Korean owners.

Almost one third of the ships sold to South Asia this quarter changed flag to the registries of Comoros, Gabon, Palau and St. Kitts and Nevis just weeks before hitting the beach. These flags are not typically used during the operational life of ships and offer 'last voyage registration' discounts. They are particularly popular with the middlemen scrap-dealers that purchase vessels cash from ship owners, and are grey- and black-listed due to their poor implementation of international maritime law.



04

CASES & INVESTIGATIONS

COURT DECISION REINFORCES SHIPPING COMPANIES' DUTY OF CARE

The UK Court of Appeal handed down a judgement in March that will have far-reaching implications across the shipping industry. Represented by law firm Leigh Day, Hamida Begum, the widow of a Bangladeshi shipbreaking worker, MD Khalil Mollah, who was killed in 2018, has been allowed to bring forward her claim of negligence against a UK shipping company. Hamida's husband fell to his death while working on the EKTA (formerly Maran Centaurus) which had been owned and operated by entities within the Angelicoussis Shipping Group and sold for demolition by one of its UK subsidiaries, Maran (UK) Limited. Maran (UK) Ltd had applied to the court to have Hamida's case struck out on the grounds that it was too far removed (in time and space) from her husband's death to owe him a duty of care. They argued that his accident was caused by the pre-existing working conditions in Chattogram over which Maran Ltd had no control. The strike-out application was heard by Mr Justice Jay in June 2020 and in a judgment handed down in July 2020, the Court refused to strike out Hamida's negligence claim, finding that she has an arguable case that Maran (UK) Ltd could have influenced where the vessel was scrapped, and that they could have ensured that it was responsibly dismantled. Maran (UK) Ltd appealed the High Court judgment and the case was heard by the Court of Appeal in February. On 10 March the Court of Appeal upheld Mr Justice Jay's finding that it is arguable that Maran (UK) Ltd owed Hamida's husband a duty of care and that it would be wrong to strike the negligence claim out at this stage.

“The defendant was responsible for sending the ship to Chattogram, knowing that this would expose workers such as the claimant's husband to the risk of death or serious injury as a result of the negligence of the shipbreaker which employed him. It was not a case where there was merely a risk that the shipbreaker would fail to take reasonable care for the safety of its workers. On the contrary, this was a certainty, as the defendant knew”

Judge Lord Justice Males

05

ACCIDENTS

Bangladesh

On 6 February, Md. Jashim (40) got severely burnt in an accident while cutting a pipe on the Russian-owned vessel NEFTEGAZ 70 (IMO 8418605) at N.R. Ship Yard. He was transported from the Chittagong Medical Hospital to Dhaka but lost his life 5 days later, on 11 February, due to the burn injuries that covered 45% of his body.

On 5 March, Ripon Mia (37) was fatally hit by a falling iron plate at Tasin Steel Ltd. The accident occurred during a night shift on the vessel LILA BUSAN (IMO 9170444), owned by South Korean company Pan Ocean. According to a Sitakunda police station officer, Ripon was transported to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital where he succumbed to the injuries. Local sources state that Tasin Steels has been temporarily closed following the accident.

On 9 March, Md. Manik (55) entered into a coma after an iron plate severely hit his head. He recovered from the coma after a 15-days stay in the hospital. Manik was dismantling the South Korean vessel NAMHAE ALOFI (IMO 9006693) at T.R. Shipbreaking yard. T.R. Shipbreaking yard, as well as Tasin Steels where a fatal accident occurred on 5 March, is owned by Didarul Alam, a Chattogram politician. Two workers were severely injured in similar accidents at Didarul Alam's yards in April and August 2020, the former on a vessel sold by Berge Bulk via cash buyer Best Oasis for breaking in Chattogram.

On 11 March, Shopi (45) and Liton (42) were severely burnt following an explosion at S.N. Corporation during the cutting of the STELLAR OCEAN MAJURO (IMO 9030979), owned by Polaris Shipping, another South Korean company. The workers were transported to the Chittagong Metropolitan Hospital to receive treatment.

06

Following the death of shipbreaking worker Ripon Mia (37) on 5 March, the Bangladesh newspaper The Daily Star reported once again on the shocking conditions at the shipbreaking yards in Bangladesh, stating that this “is not an isolated event, and that it could well have occurred at any of the over 100 such shipbreaking yards in Chattogram”. The newspaper highlights the lack of responsibility and accountability of the yard owners, and urges the Ministry of Industries to take responsibility and subject the yards to controls and inspections for proper health and safety measures.

India

According to trade unions and local sources, there were two fatal accidents at the shipbreaking yards in Alang during the first quarter of the year. One worker was killed on 8 March when he fell from a crane at plot number 1. In Alang, no official information on accidents is provided by authorities to civil society and media, revealing a serious lack of transparency. As a consequence, it is expected that many injuries and even deaths go unreported.

Pakistan

On 9 March, two workers were killed in an accident at a shipbreaking yard in Gadani. The workers were crushed by a heavy iron sheet. Several other workers were injured. According to Bashir Mehmoodani, Gadani Ship-Breaking Workers Union’s president, one of the two workers died while being transported to the closest hospital in Karachi, 50 km away. The workers were dismantling the FPSO MV ERIN (IMO 7925819) beached on 28 January at Fatima Enterprises shipbreaking yard. The vessel was owned by Malaysian Sabah International Petroleum.



07

DEVELOPMENTS IN INDIA

UK SHIPS CONNECTED TO ILLEGAL EXPORTS

The cruise sector has been severely hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, with many ship owners forced to file bankruptcy or take steps to reduce operating expenses, including the retirement of relatively young ships. According to shipping databases, at least twenty-four passenger ships have already been sold for scrapping in the last fifteen months. Whilst major cruise line Carnival Corporation has committed to recycling its vessels in a responsible manner, and companies such as Pullmantur have also chosen EU-inspected recycling facilities for their end-of-life ships, other unscrupulous owners have opted for the more profitable beaching yards in South Asia where conditions are known to put both workers and the environment at risk.

An investigative report published by [BBC's File on 4](#) denounces the illegal export of two UK cruise ships from Europe to the beaches of Alang, India. The [MARCO POLO](#) and [MV MAGELLAN](#) had sailed for UK-based Cruise & Maritime Voyages (CMV), which entered administration in 2020 due to the pandemic. The NGO Shipbreaking Platform alerted UK authorities about these two illegal exports.

"The illegal export of waste is a significant threat to the global environment, and those convicted could face two years in prison or an unlimited fine," said a representative of the [UK government](#).

Another cruise ship, the [COLUMBUS](#), illegally sailed from Greece, changed its flag to that of Comoros and was beached in Alang, India, end of March. The Platform had raised concerns with Greek authorities before the vessel departed since it was obvious that the vessel was a candidate for scrap.

08

EXPANSION OF ALANG SHIPBREAKING YARD IN 2024

The Indian Finance Ministry announced that the shipbreaking capacity in Alang will be extended by 2024 to capture 50% of the global ship recycling business. According to the Ministry, 90 shipbreaking yards in Gujarat are operating in line with the Hong Kong Convention standards. The Hong Kong Convention has, however, been strongly criticised for simply rubberstamping status quo and not setting standards that will ensure safe and environmentally sound practices. It does not ban beaching and sets no requirements, beyond compliance with national standards, for the management and disposal of hazardous wastes. The detention of BBC reporters and confiscation of footage from France 2 journalists by local officers from the Gujarat Maritime Board reveals how the industry seeks to thwart public scrutiny of the deplorable conditions at the yards. Failing to move the industry to industrial platforms, the plans to expand the beaching area will only extend the irreversible harm inflicted on the environment and the workers since the industry moved to Alang in the 1980s. The extension project is being contested by local and national NGOs.

DEVELOPMENTS IN BANGLADESH

VIOLATION OF ENVIRONMENT CONSERVATION ACT

The Department of Environment (DoE) of Chattogram has fined the Chittagong Marine Shipyard for not renewing its environmental clearance certificate. In September and December 2020, the DoE had already fined seven shipbreaking yards for breach of the environment clearance certificate's conditions.

ASBESTOS: A HIDDEN THREAT TO SHIPBREAKING WORKERS

The vast majority of end-of-life vessels are simply run ashore to be dismantled on tidal beaches in South Asia. Unskilled migrant workers, some of them children, are deployed by the tens of thousands to break down the large ships without proper protective equipment, and toxins, including asbestos, sicken the workers.

09

Early studies showed that shipbreaking workers potentially exposed to asbestos have an elevated increased mortality for lung cancer and other cancers than the general population. A study published by the European Commission in 2016 also alerts that the shipbreaking workers have an increased risk of developing asbestos related diseases and cancer. Asbestos causes around 255,000 deaths every year worldwide of which the vast majority are associated with work-related exposure. Although asbestos has been banned in more than 55 countries, some countries in Asia and the Middle East continue to use asbestos. India is the second largest user of asbestos, consuming around 350,000 tons annually.

Asbestos was extensively used in the 1980s and '90s due to its thermal insulation and fire-resistant properties. It will typically be found in the vessel's engine rooms and is often inserted between steel plates. A commercial vessel could contain as much as 10 tons of asbestos containing materials (ACMs) in engine rooms, fuel lines, sea water lines and fireproofing material, whereas navy vessels such as the air craft carriers São Paulo and Clemenceau are estimated to contain as much as 900 tons of asbestos and ACMs. Despite asbestos having been banned from ships since July 2002, recent estimates indicate that it is still found in over 65% of vessels, including 50% of all new builds.

In Bangladesh, India and Pakistan there is a lack of capacity to safely handle and dispose of the hazardous materials that originate from the vessels. As a consequence, also communities surrounding the shipbreaking area are at risk of being exposed to asbestos. Often unaware of the dangers, ACMs are re-used by workers living beside the shipbreaking yards for construction and furniture, and asbestos boards originating from the vessels are sold on the second hand market. South Asian business interests continue to support the extraction and import of asbestos, and local legislation has not banned its use.

The danger of asbestos comes from the inhalation of dust at any stage of the chain from extraction to disposal. If inhaled, the asbestos fibers can lead to fatal diseases such as lung cancer, mesothelioma (cancer of the pleura) as well as non-malignant asbestos-related diseases including asbestosis (a form of pneumoconiosis, or scarring of the lung tissue), the symptoms of which are not apparent for many years.

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Whilst an inventory of ACMs on board the vessel that clearly indicates the location and amount would allow the identification of asbestos before removal, and the use of certified personal protective equipment (PPE) with appropriate respiratory equipment as well as protective clothing, and specialized training to handle ACMs would allow for the safe removal of asbestos, it is forbidden by international law to export hazardous waste, including asbestos, from developed to developing countries. An investigative article published in December 2020 by The Daily Star (Bangladesh) and Finance Uncovered (UK) reveals, however, how the weak regulatory system in Bangladesh is exploited by the industry. False certificates claiming that the vessels are free of hazardous materials are issued by post-box companies based in offshore tax havens, making it difficult to hold the scrap-dealers, known as cash-buyers, and ship owners responsible. A decade after the Bangladeshi Government was ordered by the Supreme Court to introduce rules mandating that no vessels containing hazardous materials could be imported for scrapping purposes, vessels containing large amounts of toxic materials are still being beached in Chattogram.

In 2017, a study seeking to map asbestosis among shipbreaking workers in Bangladesh identified that from a group of 94 workers, 33 workers were suffering from asbestosis. They had all been exposed to asbestos during shipbreaking activities. The diagnosis criteria was based on years of work (>20 years) and forced vital capacity diagnosed through X-Ray (<80%).

Unsafe handling of asbestos has been documented at the shipbreaking yards in Chattogram, Bangladesh as well as in Alang, India. Occupational exposure in the shipbreaking sector has led to numerous workers suffering from asbestos related illnesses. However, there is still a need for further research on health outcomes related to asbestos-exposure of shipbreaking workers both in South Asia.

Recently, in Bangladesh, more workers have started to manifest symptoms of asbestosis such as chest pain and breathless. Asbestosis symptoms usually manifest after a period of 10 years of exposure since there is a latency of several years between the initial exposure and the outbreak of the disease. Despite their weak health condition, most of the sick workers continue to dismantle vessels to subsist and feed their families. Their affected lung capacity varies between 20-60%, most of them having their lung capacity affected by 40%. Several of the workers that have been identified as victims of asbestos are currently facing phases of the disease that require urgent medical assistance and treatment.

11

RESEARCH & READINGS

July 2015.

Wei-Te Wu, Yu-Jen Lin, Chung-Yi Li, Perng-Jy Tsai, Chun-Yuh Yang, Saou-Hsing Liou & Trong-Neng Wu

Taiwan was considered, between 1977-1988, the largest shipbreaking nation in the world, recycling around 65% of the world tonnage. A study published in 2015 shows an evident exposure-response trend of asbestos with elevated cancer incidence for different types of cancer among shipbreaking workers in Taiwan. Considering a group of 4427 shipbreaking workers, there were 940 deaths and 436 cancer cases in 24-year follow-up (1985-2008). Moreover, two cases of mesothelioma were reported both in flame cutters as in the high-asbestos exposure group.

Cancer attributable to asbestos exposure in shipbreaking workers: A match-cohort study.

October 2017.

Venkiteswaran Muralidhar, Md Faizul Ahasan & Ahad Mahmud Khan

This study, published in 2017, was pioneer in reporting the first cases of asbestosis among shipbreaking workers in Bangladesh, which affected 35% of the workforce who participated in the study and who were exposed to shipbreaking activities for at least 10 years. The association of years of exposure (>20) and forced vital capacity (< 80% of predicted) were used as diagnostic criteria and proved to be statistically significant.

Parenchymal asbestosis due to primary asbestos exposure among ship-breaking workers : report of the first cases from Bangladesh.

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OUR REPORTS

NGO Shipbreaking Platform

[The Toxic Tide - 2019 Data and figures \(2020\)](#)

[Study Report on Child Labour in the Shipbreaking Sector in Bangladesh \(2019\)](#)

[Recycling Outlook: Decommissioning of North Sea Floating Oil & Gas Units \(2019\)](#)

[Behind the Hypocrisy of Better Beaches \(2019\)](#)

[Contradiction in terms: European Union must align its waste ship exports with international law and green deal \(2020\)](#)



To ensure that safe and clean ship recycling becomes the norm, and not the exception, the Platform will continue to inform policy makers, financial and corporate leaders, as well as researchers and journalists. With a broad base of support both in orientation and geographically, including membership in ship owning as well as shipbreaking countries, the Platform plays an important role in promoting solutions that encompass the respect of human rights, corporate responsibility and environmental justice.

WILL YOU JOIN US?

IF YOU SHARE OUR VISION PLEASE MAKE A DONATION TO SUPPORT OUR WORK OR CONTACT US TO FIND OUT HOW WE CAN WORK TOGETHER!

**SUPPORT
OUR WORK**



ABOUT THIS REPORT

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Edited by:

Ingvild Jenssen, Nicola Mulinaris, Sara Costa

FIND US ONLINE

www.shipbreakingplatform.org

Twitter: @NGOShipbreaking

Facebook: /shipbreakingplatform



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Engineering 

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