

SOUTH ASIA QUARTERLY UPDATE

#24

A large, black, abstract graphic with a marbled, liquid-like texture occupies the bottom third of the page.

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.

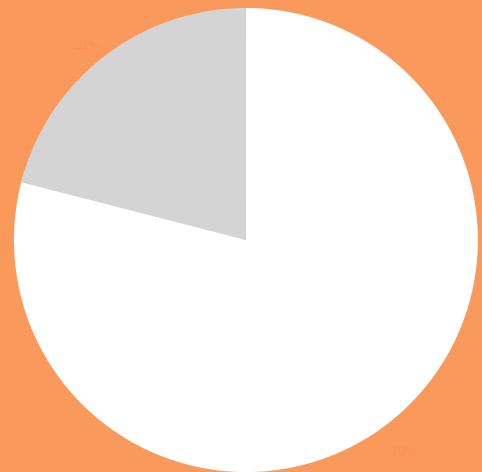
JANUARY 2021
SAQU #24

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.



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*workers suffered an accident
on South Asian
shipbreaking beaches*



79%

*of ships ended up on South
Asian beaches*

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CASES & INVESTIGATIONS

ALERT OF IMMINENT EXPORT OF FPSO-EL DORADO TO SOUTH ASIA

On 2 December, we alerted Indian authorities about the imminent arrival of the Floating Storage and Offloading (FPSO) tanker EL DORADO in Alang, Gujarat for breaking. The vessel possibly contains high levels of Naturally Occurring Radioactive Material (NORM) in its storage and production equipment as well as oily waters onboard. Industry sources reached out to us claiming that the true amounts of NORM and other hazardous materials still left onboard the ship have not been declared in its Inventory of Hazardous Materials (IHM). The IHM is necessary for the vessel's legal import to India. The tanker, formally known as FPSO Cidade do Rio de Janeiro MV14, operated in Brazilian waters and it was owned by Japanese company MODEC. After leaving Brazil and having been anchored for few months in the United Arab Emirates, EL DORADO left under tow on 25 November 2020. Action to halt the import and inspect the ship must be taken urgently. Recently, the Gujarat Police banned the import of the mercury laden FSO RADIANT / J NAT.

NORWEGIAN SHIP OWNER SENTENCED TO PRISON

George Eide, a Norwegian ship owner, has been sentenced to six months unconditional imprisonment for having assisted scrap dealer Wirana in an attempt to illegally send the TIDE CARRIER to Pakistan for scrapping. At that time (February 2017), the NGO Shipbreaking Platform, together with its member organisation Bellona, tipped the police about the imminent illegal export. As reported by Shipping Watch, Norwegian police, which considers the beaching method as a threat for the environment, informed that there is another case currently under investigation. George Eide has appealed the decision.

NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL IN INDIA ACCEPTS BEACHING, THE LEAST SOUND SHIP RECYCLING METHOD

On 27 November, the Indian National Green Tribunal (NGT) dismissed the Public Interest Litigation filed in 2017 by environmental group Conservation Action Trust (CAT). The application challenged the

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environmental clearance granted for the project aimed at upgrading and expanding the shipbreaking area in Alang. CAT raised concerns with regards to the negative impacts on marine biodiversity, and stressed that shipbreaking activities are not permissible in the intertidal area according to the Indian Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) rules. CAT argued that the true impacts of the beaching method had not been adequately addressed in the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) report upon which the expansion project had been granted environmental clearance. Further, whilst the EIA itself clearly identified the beaching method as the least environmentally sound method available when compared to using piers, slipways or dry-docks, it startlingly opted for the continued use of the beaching method in its conclusions. Scientific data, academic research and media investigations that reveal the human and environmental costs of breaking ships in Alang were submitted to the NGT. Based on the contentions brought forward by CAT, the NGT ordered the Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change (MoEF&CC) to carry out an environmental audit to assess the impacts of beaching in Alang and to consider its compliance with CRZ rules. The study, which was conducted by the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) and submitted to the tribunal in July 2020, reports the presence of high levels of heavy metals, including chromium, manganese, zinc, arsenic, cadmium and lead, in the onshore and near shore water samples taken at the shipbreaking yards, as well as iron concentrations above permitted levels in fish, and subsequently calls for measures to curtail pollution at the yards. Yet, in its conclusions, NIO sadly echoes the faulty EIA and rubberstamps a knowingly polluting method which is banned in many parts of the world. The four-judge bench of the NGT that dismissed CAT's petition chose to rely on faulty conclusions, rather than evidence and information provided in the EIA, the commissioned NOI environmental audit report as well as the petitioner.

“The most unsafe method of ship-breaking, that is, the ‘beaching’ method is used at the existing facility in Alang because it is the cheapest in terms of costs. Discarded ships are pulled into the beach during high tide and then broken down when the tide ebbs. Materials that can be salvaged from the wrecks are recovered while a lot of toxic waste flows back into the sea contaminating the water and polluting marine biodiversity.”

Debi Goenka, Executive Trustee of Conservation Action Trust

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ACCIDENTS

On 14 October, Md. Kholil (50 years old) died while dismantling the Japanese-owned vessel INNOVATOR (IMO 8508905) at Arefin shipbreaking yard in Chattogram, Bangladesh. The worker fell from the ship and died on the way to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital, located at least an hour from the Sitakunda shipbreaking area. The dismantling of the INNOVATOR had already caused the serious injury of another worker on 27 July, when an iron plate hit his head.

On 3 December, Md. Mahfuz (25 years old) died at Bangladeshi M.A. Shipbreakers Limited yard, while dismantling the Chinese-owned bulk carrier NINGBO PIONEER (IMO 8801022). The worker fell from a height of 20 feet around 3:30pm. Around 6:45pm he was transported to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital, where the doctors declared his death. According to local sources, the cutting process was happening at a very fast pace since the workers were under pressure to quickly finish the job.

NINGBO PIONEER AT CHATTOGRAM SHIPBREAKING YARD - © NGO SHIPBREAKING PLATFORM



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In Chattogram, on 14 December, two young workers, Kranti Tripura (25 years old) and Jolendra Chakma (24 years old), died after falling sick at Janata Steel and Mother Steel shipbreaking yards, respectively. As mentioned by The Daily Star, the Department of Inspections for Factories Establishment (DIFE) concluded that the deaths were not caused by any accident. However, according to local sources, Kranti's body was found around 3am inside the bulk carrier BERGE ENTERPRISE (IMO 9112090) under unclear circumstances. Jolendra was taken to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital after he felt ill in the morning. On April 28, another accident was reported on a ship from the same company – the BERGE EIGER (IMO 9201695). Md. Khalil got injured by an iron piece at Tasin Steels Ltd, an unauthorized yard owned by the Member of Parliament Didarul Alam.

On 25 December, Md Ibrahim (35 years old) lost his life at Khawja shipbreaking yard in Chattogram, Bangladesh. Ibrahim worked as a fitter man and was hit by a large iron piece while dismantling the ship STELLAR HERMES (IMO 9060326), owned by South Korean Polaris Shipping. In 2020, at least four accidents have been reported at shipbreaking yards owned by Kabir Steel group.

STELLAR HERMES AT CHATTOGRAM SHIPBREAKING YARD - © NGO SHIPBREAKING PLATFORM



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DEVELOPMENTS IN INDIA

INDIAN CASH-BUYER ACCUSED OF LAUNDERING MONEY

Dinesh Pandey, executive of major Indian cash buyer Somap, has been accused of allegedly laundering money. According to [Indian media](#), this is part of a multilevel marketing scheme which is being investigated by the Economic Offence Wind (EOW) of Uttar Pradesh. According to [TradeWinds](#), the EOW believes that Pandey was “the scheme’s main money launderer”. The reports do not mention Pandey’s ship recycling business or Somap in direct connection to money laundering. Somap has recently been in the spotlight due to controversial deals, such as the illegal export from Indonesia of the mercury-laden vessel RADIANT / J NAT, which subsequently has been banned from entering Bangladesh and India for breaking.

DEVELOPMENTS IN BANGLADESH

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH IN SHIPBREAKING: A BANGLADESHI VIEW

On 12 October, [The Financial Express](#) published an article by Dr. Hasnat M. Alamgir, Professor at East West University at the Department of Pharmacy, regarding the serious and persistent occupational safety, health and environmental hazards in the shipbreaking industry in Bangladesh. The author highlights the shipbreaking as an industry that takes advantage of “untrained and desperately poor” workers, who are not provided with adequate personal protective equipment, adequate medical support, and are not trained in recognizing the occupational diseases they are exposed to. According to the author, these measures “would be considered minimal requirements for a first world country”.

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TOXIC SHIPS ENTER BANGLADESH WITH FALSE IMPORT DOCUMENTS

An investigative article by Mostafa Yousuf of [The Daily Star](#) and Margot Gibbs of [Finance Uncovered](#) (UK) was published on 19 December. The investigation sets in evidence how the weak regulatory system in Bangladesh is exploited by cash buyers and ship owners, allowing the dismantling of end-of-life vessels containing asbestos and other hazardous materials. Pre-cleaning certificates are falsified and issued by companies based in offshore tax havens, making it difficult to hold cash-buyers and ship owners responsible. In a country incapable of controlling the veracity of those certificates, the Bangladesh system has failed, putting at risk workers and harming the coastal environment.

SHIPBREAKING WORKERS STILL RECEIVING HALF OF LEGAL WAGES

According to an investigation by [The Daily Star](#), shipbreaking workers are still not receiving the government declared minimum wage of BDT 16,000 approved in 2018. The Daily Star encourages the government to urgently take action to rectify this serious violation, to monitor it, and to pay back wages of the past two years.

MEHRIN SHIP RECYCLING YARD FINED BY DOE

The Department of Environment (DoE) [fined](#) Mehrin Ship Recycling yard at Sitakunda for violating the conditions established by the environmental clearance certificate. Along with the ship recycling yard, the DoE fined another 14 businesses for breaching the Environment Conservation Act.



DEVELOPMENTS IN PAKISTAN

FOUR YEARS AFTER THE MAJOR ACCIDENT IN GADANI

On 1 November, the Shipbreaking Workers Union Gadani and the National Trade Union Federation Pakistan (NTUF) organised an event marking the major explosion of 2016, considered the worst disaster in the history of global shipbreaking. The explosion and massive fire occurred onboard the FPSO ACES tanker sold to Pakistan by an Indonesian company. The vessel held thousand tons of residual bunker oil and many gas cylinders. The accident caused 29 deaths and at least 60 severe injuries. It took the Pakistani military three days to extinguish the fire. Four years after the disaster, the government has not taken concrete actions in order to safeguard the lives of thousands of shipbreaking workers and to protect the coastal environment. Shipbreaking workers are not registered with the social security department, do not have pension schemes, and their collective rights are still not recognized. The memory of this major and fatal explosion should remind Pakistan of the importance of moving the industry off the beach to areas that are under strict control, using alternative and safer methods in docks or along piers.

“There is no law covering shipbreaking workers in Pakistan, due to which shipbreakers and contractors are forcing thousands of people to work in conditions worse than slavery.”
Nasir Mansoor, NTUF Secretary General

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CASE STUDIES

SHIPBREAKING WORKERS' FAMILIES AT NAOGOAN DISTRICT, BANGLADESH

These case studies tell the stories of the families of three deceased shipbreaking workers. Interviews were conducted during a visit to their home villages in March 2020.

Zahidur Islam was the youngest brother of Saidur Rahman. Saidur was 32 years old when he died on 14 May 2014 at S. Trading ship breaking yard. The accident took place while he was dismantling the Crude Oil Tanker KIMA (IMO 9058828). Saidur died due to toxic gas exposure caused by a cylinder explosion. He had worked for 10 years at different shipbreaking yards. Saidur used to return to his home village twice a year, and usually sent 50-60% of his salary to help his family. As a compensation for the accident, Saidur's family received one lakh taka (around EUR 950) from the workers welfare foundation and 1,5 lakh (around EUR 1450) from the yard owners. However, it was difficult to receive the compensation from the yard owner. Zahidur was also a shipbreaking worker, but, following his brother's accident, his family did not want him to work again in Chattogram. Today, Zahidur's family (mother, wife and two children) own a piece of land for farming, which is their only way of subsistence. Zahidur claims financial support from the government to keep the land and to be able to give the opportunity to his children to go to school.

LEFT PICTURE: ABDUL MANNAN ZOARDER'S FAMILY
RIGHT PICTURE: ZAHIDUR ISLAM



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Abdul Mannan Zoarder was 55 years old when he died on 20 February 2018. His family faced financial problems, as most of the shipbreaking workers and families do, leading him to start working at the shipbreaking yards in Chittagong. Before his decision, he worked in farming. Abdul used to return home around 3-4 times/year, supporting his family financially. Abdul was aware of the unsafe and dangerous conditions at the yards, but felt forced to work there because of the money he was able to gain. Abdul died during an accident at H.M. shipbreaking yard, while he was carrying pipes and one fell on his head, causing his immediate death. After four months, his children and wife received four lakh (around EUR 3900) compensation from the yard owners, and 10.000 taka (around EUR 90) after eight months. They also received one lakh taka (around EUR 950) from the Labour Department a year after the accident. His daughter married at the age of 15, whilst his son attends secondary school. Abdul's brother is a teacher at a local college, and, besides his own family of four members, he also needs to help Abdul's wife and children. Abdul's family has repeatedly called for financial support from the government.

Md. Abdul Jalil was 40 years old, and worked for 20 years at the shipbreaking yards. He used to return to his home village only twice a year. Abdul got severely injured during an explosion that took place on May 15 inside the ship BUNGA KELANA 4 (IMO 9178343) owned by AET TANKERS. He was transported to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital, and later to the burn unit at Dhaka College Hospital, where he passed away on May 20. He left behind his wife and daughter. After his death, his family received two lakh taka (around EUR 1900) from the labour department (fifteen days after the accident) and four lakh taka (around EUR 3900) from the yard owner (one month after the accident). Abdul's family deposited the money in the bank, allowing them to keep living in the house with the interests they receive from the bank, a house that Jalil built himself. Jalil's wife wants her daughter of 17 years old to study and obtain the 2nd Certificate at school. She also wishes her daughter to get married to be able to support the family.

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RESEARCH & READINGS

2015

Paridhi Poddar & Sarthak Sood. National University of Juridical Sciences, Kolkata.

This paper argues that, in the long term, from an environmental, labour rights' and economic perspective, phasing out beaching in favour of an alternative method called dry-docking would be the most sustainable approach for India. The authors also alert policy-makers about the serious costs of ignoring international legislation and continuing to support the beaching method.

[Revisiting the shipbreaking industry in India: Axing out environmental damage, labour rights' violation and economic myopia.](#)

4 January 2020

Asma Binta Hasan, A. H. M. Selim Reza, Sohail Kabir, Md. Abu Bakar Siddique, Md. Aminul Ahsan & Md. Ahedul Akbor. SN Applied Sciences.

This study reports for the first time reference data regarding the accumulation and distribution of heavy metals in the agricultural soils and food crops around the Sitakunda shipbreaking area of Chattogram, Bangladesh. The study reveals that the soils around the shipbreaking area are significantly contaminated with zinc (Zn), copper (Cu), lead (Pb), and cadmium (Cd) while moderately contaminated by iron (Fe) and manganese (Mn). Human consumable vegetables, fruits, and rice grain grown in the surrounding agricultural lands are mostly contaminated by Zn, Cu, and chromium (Cr), which is considered a potential human health risk to the local consumers in the Sitakunda shipbreaking area.

[Accumulation and distribution of heavy metals in soil and food crops around the ship breaking area in southern Bangladesh and associated health risk assessment](#)

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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**



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