

Training in Alang's Ship Recycling Industry



file photo

BY [DR. KANU PRIYA JAIN AND DR. ANAND HIREMATH](#) 2018-05-02 18:56:51

Earlier, the entire ship recycling industry in South Asia was characterized by below par health, safety and environmental (HSE) standards. However, the industry in India has evolved rapidly within the last few years as several yards are now upgraded to meet the standards set by the IMO Hong Kong Convention (HKC).

To date, about 61 yards in Alang amounting to more than half of the active yards, have obtained the statements of compliance (SoC) with HKC from IACS-member classification societies such as ClassNK, RINA and IR Class. The elevation in the yard standards can be attributed to the investments made by the yard owners to upgrade infrastructure levels. The role of other stakeholders such as local government bodies, shipowners and cash buyers in improving HSE and workers training standards must also be appreciated.

At present, almost half of the active yards in Alang, India hold valid SoCs with the HKC. These certifications have changed the standard operating practices of the certified recycling yards in India as such yards have improved their infrastructure facilities such as impervious flooring for secondary and tertiary cutting, cranes to lift heavy weight items, storm water drainage and collection system, etc. In addition, safe-for-entry, safe-for-hot work, confined-entry, working-at-height and other similar procedures to ensure safe and environmentally sound recycling are also in place. These improvements are further supported by the Alang-Sosiya yard modernization project costing INR 730 Crore (\$109 million) funded mainly by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

The infrastructure and procedural upgrades on the recycling yards in India have changed the face of the industry and ship owners have started to recognize these positive changes. Although these changes provide a robust platform to achieve safe and environmentally sound ship recycling, their effectiveness depends largely on the skills of the workforce. The adequately trained workforce is of paramount importance to achieve incident and accident-free ship recycling process.

For this purpose, the Training and Welfare Complex operated by the Gujarat Maritime Board (GMB) has been in operation in Alang since 2003. The complex is used to provide training and education to ship recycling yard workers on safety and environmentally sound operations. The total number of workers trained so far is close to 120,000 since inception of the training complex. Recently, the Ministry of Shipping has started working in close association with GMB to ensure that Alang's business environment and the working condition of the workers improve further.

The Ministry under its flagship program Sagarmala has sanctioned INR 30 crore (\$4.48 million) in 2016-17 out of which INR 10 crore (\$1.49 million) has been released for skill development of the workers focused on occupational safety and health training. It is now mandatory for a worker to undergo a 12-day skills training program before he can begin work in any shipyard. Effectively anyone who works in Alang ship recycling yards today undergoes the basic safety training. The program has trained 4,036 workers since February 2017.

Additionally, efforts are being made to achieve the following objectives:

1. to develop a more robust training framework and delivery
2. to utilize National Occupational Standards (NOS) and standardize course curriculum in ship breaking
3. to have credible certification bodies in ship breaking
4. to learn and comply with the national safety regulations of Ministry of Labor's Directorate General, Factory Advice Service and Labor Institutes (DGFASLI)
5. to ensure all workers have protective gears and safety equipment and are trained to use such equipment
6. to enhance the involvement of employers in the training and welfare of workers.

Therefore, the Ministry of Shipping and Ministry of Labor had sent a joint central team to Alang in May 2017. The team visited the facilities and interacted with all stakeholders. Several important decisions were taken, such as finalizing the role of DGFASLI for better safety processes, third party certification of the workers' training by Indian Register of Shipping (IR Class) to ensure professionalism, better productivity and safety of the workers.

Several decisions have now been implemented. For example, DGFASLI has reviewed the course curriculum, new occupational standards in ship recycling have been developed by the Strategic Manufacturing Sector Skill Council and the Indian Register of Shipping has begun third party certification of the training.

The global importance of the Indian ship recycling industry, particularly with respect to compliance with the Hong Kong convention, the unique profile of workers marked by low educational qualifications and a high attrition rate makes continuous quality training paramount to improve their working and living conditions. With this in mind and keeping our corporate social responsibility at forefront, the GMS Green Team in collaboration with IR Class also conducts safety training for a selection of ship recycling yard workers in Alang to complement the efforts undertaken by the government authorities.

The GMS-IR Class combined team conducts a unique training program called train-the-trainer where up to 20 safety officers from different yards are trained at once. In effect, this program extends the outreach of our training program to about 800 to 1,000 workers which are eventually trained by the trained safety officers (40 to 50 workers by each safety officer). This program has a greater outreach and effect on improving the workers' safety standards.

The above described training programs are designed to improve the skill-set of the ship recycling yard workers and safety officers. More such programs are required to enhance the quality of training provided to yard workers so that they can be empowered to undertake safe and environmentally sound recycling of ships. The quality of training provided to yard workers decides how the ship recycling process goes. All industry stakeholders must come together to improve the workers' training standards in the ship recycling industry. This would be a win-win situation for all parties involved in the process of recycling end-of-life ships, as it will prevent accidents and improve the quality of ship recycling.

Dr. Kanu Priya Jain and Dr. Anand Hiremath are members of the Responsible Ship Recycling Department at GMS (Dubai).

The opinions expressed herein are the author's and not necessarily those of The Maritime Executive.

Source: <https://www.maritime-executive.com/editorials/training-in-alang-s-ship-recycling-industry#gs.bnbppPo>