

Perceiving “Beaching” method in Ship Recycling by Dr.Anand Hiremath & Michail Matthaikis , GMS

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There are around 120 ship recycling yards that are currently operational, all using the beaching method of recycling and capable to handle all sizes and types of end-of-life vessels in Alang ,India . Out of these 120 yards, in the last three years 70 yards have invested in improvements in their infrastructure, work procedures and training of the workforce, in line with the technical standards of the Hong Kong International

Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships (HKC).

The decision makers in the European Union has become apprehensive with the word “beaching” due to the lobbying of some specific groups in the past twelve years .

Beaching :

It is just a process of bringing a vessel near the shore (i.e. near the recycling yard) using the vessel’s own powerwhile taking advantage of the tide. It is widely known that beaching takes place in India and landing takes place in Turkey.

The question which arises is how the Landing method employed in Turkey is different from the method used in India? Practically, both are the same. One will be surprised to know that landing takes place even in the United States (Texas).That means,the process itself is not a problem. The actual problem starts on how the vessel is cut at a yard, after the beaching(or landing, or floating) of the vessel.

But what is the reason so many yard owners in Alang decided to make these significant investments in infrastructure and working standards?

In 2009, the adaptation of the Hong Kong International Convention for the safe and environmentally sound recycling of ships, which was then the only International Convention on ship recycling, was the driving force for all the significant upgrades that took place in the ship recycling yards in India. In addition, the Classification Societies started to show interest in auditing yards against the HKC standards.

On top of the above, few ship owners started visiting several recycling yards in South Asia to witness if the high recycling standards were in accordance with the HKC. As a result, in the end of 2015, the first 4 recycling yards in India were certified by ClassNK with a Statement of Compliance (SOC) with the HKC. Soon, more yards joined this virtuous circle with the result that now the majority of Alang works in line with the Hong Kong Convention.

On the other hand, though, while Turkey is claimed to be a green recycling destination, it will be surprising to mention that only 8 yards out of 22 in total, received a SOC with the HKC from the Classification Societies.

As stated earlier, in India, 70 yards have been certified by various Classification Societies with Statements of Compliance (SOC) with the requirements of the HKC out of the total 120 working yards. The capacity of these 70 yards is around 65% of the total LDT capacity of Alang, and as that is nearly 4.5 M ton per year, the SOC certified yards have the capacity to handle nearly 3 M LDT per year.

The above, clearly shows the amount of time, effort and money that has been invested by a significant proportion of the yard owners in Alang, to meet the International recycling standards.

It should be noted that the yards both in Turkey and India are certified by the Classification Societies against the same HKC standards. But even with these high recycling standards in India, currently, only 15 yards are recycling vessels which demand a SOC with the HKC out of the 70 yards in total, which hold a SOC with the HKC.

Yard Owners disgruntled

Although, these yards offer quality recycling services, the majority of owners so far are not interested in quality/green recycling. There have been questions in international conferences recently on when will 100% of the recycling yards in Alang be HKC certified. However the more pressing question that yard owners are asking now in Alang is "Why do we have to achieve 100% certification when the existing SOC yards are not getting enough vessels requiring and paying for HKC standards for recycling?"

What is important to underline is that even though the situation is tough, most of the owners of SOC yards are continuing to invest to further to upgrade their yards to meet the EU Ship Recycling Regulation (EUSRR) standards, in an effort to be included in the list of the EU-approved yards. Though, only 9 yards (with cumulative recycling capacity of 0.6 M LDT) applied two years ago for inclusion in the EU-List, the approval of these 9 applications from India, will certainly boost the confidence of yard owners and the bar of recycling standards will go further high.

Those Indian yards should be included in the EU-approved list as they hold a certificate from an Independent Verifier in accordance with the requirements of the European Union's Ship Recycling Regulation (EUSRR) 1257/2013. Upon the inclusion, the other yards in India will wish to do the same by upgrading their facilities and as a result, Alang will be completely transformed.

Similarly, Bangladesh and Pakistan will be significantly improved as Alang will become the force of change for these recycling locations as well. In case that the yards that have applied for inclusion to the EU list are not approved by the European Commission, then, all the investments in quality recycling will dry up, making those who believed in the green future of ship recycling in the sub-continent, look foolish.

It should be recalled that the objective behind the EUSRR was also to catalyze the early ratification of the HKC. The decision makers should take a pragmatic approach to fulfill the objective than hindering the growth of quality recycling in South Asian Countries – which recycle more than 85% of the total end-of-life vessels per year.

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