

Beaching Ban Bad for Ship Recycling Industry

by Joseph R. Fonseca
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Alang Beach in India, where large numbers of ships end their days

On Monday 20th of April 2015, Michael Grey of Lloyds List published the article "Name-calling bullies" where he outlined his opposition to the idea of banning beaching and gave reasons why such a decision would be impractical and unethical for the ship recycling industry.

In fact, throughout his article he stressed the improvements of safety and environmental standards which have taken place in facilities in the Indian subcontinent and highlighted the fact that these improvements had been witnessed during a fact-finding visit to Alang, India, by a delegation of Japanese industry and government officials organised by GMS. To quote the article directly:

"The visit, which was organised by the cash buyer Global Marketing Systems, was able to see the improvements that were being made and which could be more widely spread around the whole subcontinental recycling sector."

In his article there are few other arguments worth highlighting, including that if the decision is taken to ban beaching, there would be a limited capacity of yards to carry out recycling; IMO's efforts

through the Hong Kong Convention to promote the safe and environmentally sound recycling of ships; and the 40,000 jobs associated with the industry of ship recycling in the Indian subcontinent.

On the 1st of May 2015, Adam Corbett wrote in TradeWinds (Volume 26 / Number 17) that "Belgium opposes the Brussels ban on beach scrapping." Throughout his article similar opinions as the aforementioned one were expressed.

It is evident that the industry has already taken notice not only of the developments which have taken place in ship recycling facilities which practice environmentally sound beaching methods, but also of the necessity of such facilities to not be excluded from the EU regulation around ship recycling.

The Rising Standards of the Indian Subcontinent

With the raising of ship recycling standards in the Indian subcontinent spreading, and key players in the industry becoming aware of these improvements in the region, the resistance to the European Commission's (EC's) possible ban on beaching is steadily increasing.

Consequently, Corbett states that "In a letter to Karmenu Vella, European Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Belgian Environment Minister, Celine Fremault, said she was keen to see that bad practices in beaching are stopped, but explained that it would be outside the scope of the SSR (Ship Recycling Regulation) to implicitly ban one method of demolition."

The tide seems to be turning against those who are opposed to beaching without being willing to witness the facts for themselves. It is evident that there are facilities capable of complying with internationally acceptable standards and regulations in the Indian subcontinent, and this seems to be increasingly recognised as highlighted by Celine Fremault's statement quoted by Corbett as follows:

"We would like to formally request that all ship recycling facilities in third countries will be assessed individually, based on the requirements of the regulation and guidance in line with the regulation, taking into account the specifics of the recycling state and recycling method used."

“Alang is not just Alang”

GMS, in coordination with a Danish Shipowner arranged for a study visit by vetting of ship recycling facilities in Alang. The visit which took place in April 2015, included representatives from the Danish

Shipowners' Association (DSA) who witnessed the ship recycling practices which are actually taking place locally.

Following up to this study visit, the Director of the DSA, Mrs Maria Bruun Skipper, wrote that "Alang is not just Alang" from which it was acknowledged that some of the yards have "undergone a positive development in order to comply with the requirements that will be set by the forthcoming Hong Kong Convention". Going into more detail, Skipper highlighted in her article that:

"We consequently saw, among other things, workers wearing safety equipment and undergoing six-monthly routine medical check-ups. We also noted that the shipyards were engaged in operations such as asbestos handling, and regularly compiled reports from water and soil pollution tests etc. Finally, we were able to personally observe that three of the shipyards had laid a concrete base beneath the beach to stop seepage of harmful substances."

Having witnessed the facts in Alang, it appears that the DSA has recognized the need for ratification of the Hong Kong Convention, and the necessity for the European Union to be cautious from excluding a place such as Alang because of the bad reputation historically.

Finally, it was worth highlighting that those who have visited Alang, have immediately changed their (negative) views, and this is also evident in the DSA statement, "Our visit was just one visit, but also an eye-opener that 'Alang is not just Alang'".

For more information about the DSA visit and rest of the comments please visit <https://www.shipowners.dk/en/presse/nyheder/alang-is-not-just-alang/>

European Commission Officials Need To Visit Improved Alang Yards

GMS would like to draw your attention to Corbett's statement that "The EC is yet to visit breaking yards that have made significant improvements". With that in mind, it would be encouraging to see the EU and India coordinating a direct dialogue for a fact finding mission aiming to promote cooperation and awareness, as was recently conducted between India and Japan. Of course, GMS would be willing to facilitate such a delegation at any time.

GMS and Responsible Recycling

GMS has the expertise and resources to guide owners regarding the quality of various yards in different countries, including Turkey, China and India. GMS has been actively trying to promote responsible ship recycling practices for a long time. It is therefore to our satisfaction to see that the industry is taking notice of the need to work jointly, towards encouraging continuous developments, especially when it comes to environmentally sound and friendly recycling practices. One of the best ways to achieve this is by rewarding facilities which are setting high Corporate Social Responsibility standards.

Source: <http://www.marinelink.com/news/recycling-beaching392960.aspx>