



Scrap the Recycling of Ships Act, 2019 Do Not Let India Turn Into A Dump Yard of World's Hazardous Waste

**NPSSF Rejects the Recycling of Ships Act, 2019
aimed at multiplying the profit of the merchants of death,
the investors in ship breaking industries of our country.**

The Recycling of Ships Act, 2019, though camouflaged as an act to regulate ship breaking industry, is primarily aimed at opening of our coasts for dumping of abandoned ships of the world. Ship breaking is one of the most hazardous industries the world has ever experienced. The abandoned ships are store houses of toxic materials and pollutants. Depending on their size and weight, each abandoned ship contains - between 10 and 100 tons of paint containing lead, cadmium, organotins, arsenic, zinc and chromium. Ships also contain a wide range of other hazardous wastes, sealants containing PCBs, up to 7.5 tones of various types of asbestos and several thousands liters of oil (engine oil, bilge oil, hydraulic and lubricants oils and grease). Tankers additionally hold up to 1,000 cubic meters of residual oil. Most of these materials have been defined as hazardous waste under the Basel Convention*. Ship breaking activities is a threat to both the terrestrial and marine environment as well as to public health.

Until the late 20th century, the majority of ship-breaking activity took place in the port cities of industrialized countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States. But then the industry started shifting to third world countries. Currently, the global center of the ship breaking and recycling industry is located in South Asia, specifically Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan. These three countries account for 70–80 percent of the international market for ship breaking of ocean-going vessels, with China and Turkey accounting for most of the rest. Only about 5 percent of the global volume of such vessels is scrapped outside these five countries. This has happened due to two main reasons - a. availability of cheap labour, and b. adoption of stringent environmental and occupational norms in the developed countries that made ship breaking much costlier.

In the largest ship breaking centre in India at Alang on Gujarat coast the environmental protection has been very limited in most yards and the sound management of asbestos, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), ozone-depleting substances (ODS), and a range of heavy metals is virtually nonexistent. The chief concerns are:

- Dismantling of ships in the unprotected intertidal zone instead of dry dock;
- No adequate environmental impact assessment regarding pollution caused by toxics paints, slag and debris released in the intertidal zone, the adequacy of oil spill remediation and air pollution with toxic fumes;
- Lack of sufficient Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and its adequate use as well as lack of proper training, recurrence of accidents and loss of life;

- Unsound hazardous waste management (in particular, re-sale of asbestos-containing materials and lack of PCB-destruction facility);
- Poor living conditions, lack of proper medical facilities, wages lower than living wage;
- No strict law enforcement.

The severe pollution generated at the ship breaking yards of Alang continues to affect severely the air, water and soil quality of the area. Fish stock has almost perished and the fish available there is highly contaminated with heavy metals and other toxics.

The Recycling of Ships Act, 2019 has opened the coasts of India to import abandoned ships for recycling from all over the world. This import of hazardous waste is against the spirit of Basel Convention, of which India has been a signatory. Not only that, without restricting ship breaking in dry dock and allowing it in inter-tidal zones the Act renders itself into an instrument to destroy one of the most eco-sensitive zones. Moreover Environmental damages could worsen as a result of sea level rise. The SBRI location and industrial practices make it highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and especially to sea level rise. The ship breaking industry's legacy pollution could pose significant threats and challenges at both local and regional scales as rising ocean and tide levels submerge beach and near-shore ship breaking areas, washing out accumulated pollutants. In storm surge events, a sudden release of quantities of the contaminated landside beach material into the marine zone may severely affect local fisheries.

The world community took serious note of the seriousness of transboundary movement of hazardous waste way back in 1994 and through BAN amendment proposed prohibition of all transboundary movements of hazardous wastes covered by the Basel Convention that are intended for final disposal, and of all transboundary movements of hazardous wastes that are destined for reuse, recycling or recovery operations.

It is unfortunate that the Government of India, though a party to the Basel Convention, did not sign the BAN amendment. It was an act presumably to enrich the coffers of investors in recycling industries at the cost of our environment, natural resources and the life and livelihood of people dependent on these resources.

The small scale fishing communities reject this conspiracy against the people of India.

Scrap the Recycling of Ships Act, 2019.
Save Environment.
Save Water, Save Fish, Save Fisher People.

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