

## South Asian Scrapyards Maintained Market Lead in 2024, Despite Injuries



Shipbreaking plots along the waterfront at Alang (NASA file image)

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South Asia's shipbreaking sector may have seen a lull in activity last year, but it maintained its leading position in the global vessel recycling industry - and its reputation for risk. According to NGO Shipbreaking Platform, 45 workers were injured breaking ships in Pakistan, Bangladesh and India last year, and nine were killed.

By the NGO's count, 80 percent of all scrapped tonnage was demolished in South Asia last year, and Bangladesh led the way with 2.4 million gross tons of capacity (130 ships). India was a distant second at 1.5 million, and Pakistan brought up the rear with 0.6 million - barely more than Turkey, the primary option outside of South Asia.

Accidents and fatalities are common enough in yards that use the beaching method, standard in South Asia (with variations and improvements at some facilities). NGO Shipbreaking Platform identified nine men who were killed during operations at these yards in 2024, including six who died in one explosion at an SN Corporation facility.

On September 7, an explosion occurred aboard the former SCI vessel *Suvarna Swarajya* at SN Corporation Plot 2 in Chittagong. Six workers were killed, four were left in critical condition and two others were injured.

The NGO noted that a few months before the blast, SN Corporation Unit 2 had received its certificate of Hong Kong Convention compliance from a major class society, an industry-favored certification of yard safety and quality. After the blast, Bangladeshi authorities revoked SN Corporation's environmental permit, but the company has retained its IMO HKC certification.

By the NGO's tally, the blast brought SN Corporation's total fatality count to 20 deaths since 2010, just over one a year on a long-term average.

"That a facility such as SN Corporation – and the more than 100 beaching yards that have similarly obtained [HKC] Statements of Compliance – supposedly fulfils the requirements of the Hong Kong Convention says much about the low standards set by the IMO," said Ingvild Jenssen, the executive director and founder of NGO Shipbreaking Platform. "Now, even yards that are not licensed to operate nationally maintain their Statement of Compliance. Clearly, the upcoming entry into force of the Hong Kong Convention does not provide the solutions needed to shift the sector towards sustainable ship recycling."

Scrapping activity is pointing up in 2025, according to leading cash buyer GMS. Container carriers are expected to be oversupplied with tonnage when the Red Sea crisis fully subsides, and owners will likely send older boxships to buyers at Alang, Gadani and Chittagong in larger numbers than in 2024, an unusually quiet year for demolition sales.