

### A Toxic Graveyard in the Fish Bowl of Andhra Pradesh

A Greenpeace briefing on the grim reality of ship-breaking yards, in response to the proposal for a new ship-breaking yard at Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh.

The ship-breaking yards of the world provide the last resting place for end-of-life ships. At these yards, ships are scrapped, primarily for their steel content. Ship scrapping, often referred to as ship breaking, is a dirty and dangerous business. Almost all of the vessels slated for breaking contain hazardous substances, such as asbestos, oil sludge, paints contains lead, other heavy metals like cadmium and arsenic, poisonous biocides as well as PCBs. Due to the high costs of upholding environmental standards in developed countries, this industry has migrated to developing countries like India, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

Half of the world's ocean-going ships end up in India, especially in Alang (Bhavnagar district, Gujarat) and in Mumbai. Alang is one of the largest ship-breaking yards in the world situated at the Arabian Sea coast in the Gulf of Khambat. After the beaching of the MV Kota Tenjong in 1983 this once pristine beach turned into the world's leading ship breaking yard, and inevitably, into a toxic hotspot.

#### **A Dirty Business**

Although touted as a 'recycling' business, ship-breaking activities pollute the sea, soil, rivers and air. Emissions and discharge of toxic materials into the sea, ground and air cause both acute and long term pollution impacts. Marine sediments from the Alang ship-breaking yard have severely polluted the local marine environment with mineral oil, heavy metals, PAHs, PCBs and organotin compounds. At Alang, the sea has been so intensely contaminated by effluents from the ship-breaking yards that local fishermen need to go further offshore to find fish.

In India, ships-for-scrap continue to arrive laden with toxic materials, in flagrant violation of hazardous waste rules and the directives issued by the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court directives expressly state that each ship-for scrap must be decontaminated of all toxic wastes before it is allowed to dock at Alang for scrapping.

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) the United Nations body regulating the shipping industry had issued guidelines for clean ship recycling in July 2003, but these remained a feeble attempt because they continued to be 'voluntary guidelines'. Greenpeace has repeatedly challenged the IMO, demanding that these guidelines be made mandatory guidelines since a global regime is the only way to ensure that the shipping industry be made to clean up their ships before sending them ahead to ship-breaking yards.

#### **Sharp Rise in Ship-Breaking Activities**

In 1999, the Maltese-flagged oil tanker Erika collapsed. It leaked more than 10,000 tons of heavy oil, polluting 400 km of coast of Brittany (France). After this accident, the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) decided to phase-out all single-hull tankers.

This decision comes into effect on the 5<sup>th</sup> of April 2005, indicating a substantial increase in the number of ships headed to the scrap market.

To cope with this glut, the industry is on the lookout for new locations to carry on their dirty business. There have been recent attempts to set up new ship-breaking yards at Kakinada in India and in Guinea Bissau in Africa.

Recently introduced rules and regulations, made stringent because of sustained campaigning by Greenpeace and other NGOs, have made it difficult for the shipping industry to operate in Gujarat. As a result, the shipping industry and a handful of ship-breakers from Gujarat have started lobbying for a new ship-breaking yard to be constructed at Kakinada, on the east coast of India.

Meanwhile, in the ship-breaking yards of India, it is business as usual. A death a day, an explosion every now and then, and vast quantities of hazardous substances and waste being dumped unceremoniously on unsuspecting shores. Workers have been put on high risk and are exposed to poison 24 hours a day. All rules and regulations are thrown into sea along with the toxics materials.

### **Save Kakinada while there is hope**

The ship-breakers' move to create a new ship-breaking yard at Kakinada will destroy the livelihood of the local fishermen, pollute the clean sandy beaches and mangrove forest of Coringa and devastate an area renowned as the 'Fish and Paddy bowl' of Andhra Pradesh. If the Andhra Pradesh State government authorizes the set up of the ship-breaking yards in Kakinada it would also be authorizing the creation of another toxic hotspot, one that would turn this naturally endowed region into another Patancheru or Alang.

Given the evidence of contamination and complete destruction of the marine environment at Alang, Greenpeace calls upon the Andhra Pradesh government to protect Kakinada and prevent the creation of another toxic hotspot in Andhra Pradesh.