

## DAILY SHIPPING NEWSLETTER



DAILY SHIPPING NEWSLETTER : Friday 08-03-2002



**Operation  
Enduring Freedom**

## EVENTS, INCIDENTS & OPERATIONS

### Gifwolk boven Antwerpen door brand op schip

ANTWERPEN - Door een brand aan boord van een vrachtschip vol kunstmest in de haven van Anwerpen is gisteravond een gifwolk boven de stad ontstaan. Fase twee van het rampenplan werd afgekondigd omdat er enige tijd sprake was van ontploffingsgevaar.



Vlammen laaien op boven de Star Ikebana in het Antwerpse Churchlldok.

Een aantal personen raakte door de dampen onwel en moesten naar het ziekenhuis. De brandweer gaf rond elf uur het sein brand meester.

De lading kunstmest van het vrachtschip [Star Ikebana](#), varend onder de Singaporese vlag en voor anker aan het Churchlldok, vatte omstreeks negen uur vlam. Vermoedelijk was een gedeelte van de lading gaan smeulen.

De brand veroorzaakte hevige rookontwikkeling. Er kwamen stikstofoxide, amoniumnitraat en natrium vrij en die stoffen zijn zeer irriterend voor ogen en luchtwegen. Ook kunnen ze waterophoping in de longen veroorzaken. Inwoners van de dorpen Ekeren, Hoevenen, Kapellen, Mariaburg, Stabroek, Zwijndrecht en Lillo kregen het advies ramen en deuren gesloten te houden. Desondanks meldden zich bij de nooddiensten diverse mensen met ademhalingsproblemen.

In de haven werden bedrijven in een straal van één kilometer rond het schip tot kwart over elf verplicht de werkzaamheden neer te leggen. Dit leidde tot files op de Noorderbaan omdat werknemers

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van Opel Belgium die nachtdienst hadden, het bedrijf niet in mochten.

Nadat fase twee van het rampenplan was afgekondigd, nam de Antwerpse burgemeester Detiège de leiding van de operatie over. Nabluswerkzaamheden gingen nog enige tijd door, omdat de brandweer rekening hield met ontploffingsgevaar.

### Vlaardingen

Een soortgelijk tafereel speelde zich gistermiddag af in Vlaardingen. Hier brak brand uit op een Scheveningse viskotter, die voor reparatie op de werf ligt. Door de rookontwikkeling moesten de inwoners van Schiedam-West in hun huizen blijven. Vijf mensen werden in het ziekenhuis behandeld wegens ademhalingsproblemen.

## Brandende viskotter houdt Schiedammers binnen

**ROTTERDAM - In Schiedam heeft de bevolking gistermiddag in woningen en gebouwen moeten schuilen voor een prikkelende rook, die werd veroorzaakt door een brand op de Scheveningse viskotter De Friesland, die in Vlaardingen op de reparatiewerf ligt.**

Na het loeien van de alarmsirenes moest iedereen binnen blijven. De bevolking liep echter geen gevaar. Wel werden gistermiddag vijf mensen in het ziekenhuis behandeld wegens ademhalingsproblemen.

De brand was gisteravond onder controle, hoewel toen nog niet geblust. Volgens de Rotterdamse burgemeester Opstelten kan de brand nog dagen voortduren.

Tijdens werkzaamheden vatte gisteren aan het eind van de middag isolatiemateriaal vlam. Het zogenaamde purschuim zat in de dubbele wand van het schip. Veel vlammen waren er niet te zien, maar het rookte hevig. Al snel bleek dat in de walm kleine concentraties blauwzuur aanwezig waren. Die waren echter te laag om schadelijk te zijn.

Het Regionaal Operationeel Team, Regot, kwam bijeen in het World Port Centre. Daar konden brandweer, politie en gemeenten gezamenlijk werken. Zowel in Schiedam als Vlaardingen kwam de rampenstaf bijeen. Rond 20.30 uur meldde Opstelten dat de brand onder controle was. Alle beperkende maatregelen in het gebied werden opgeheven en de bewoners konden weer de straat op. De rook was zo dik, dat gistermiddag de Beneluxtunnel en de nabijgelegen A4 in zijn geheel moesten worden afgesloten. Het zicht was minder dan vijf meter. Op andere wegen werd het verkeer omgeleid via de Van Brienenoordbrug, maar al snel ontstonden kilometerslange files op alle wegen rond Rotterdam.

Ook het treinverkeer ondervond hinder van het brandend schip. De NS sloten De Hoekse Lijn op last van de brandweer en politie vanaf 18.30 uur af. Passagiers tussen Rotterdam en Hoek van Holland konden rekenen op een vertraging van een uur.



## Pak One wreck removal begins

THE delicate towing operation began today to relocate the 60 m-long wreck of LPG carrier Pak One from where it has been drifting, since resurfacing last month and posing a navigation hazard in the Gulf of Thailand, to its permanent site for sinking. The vessel is floating head up with its aft end deep below the water surface, and is under tow at only one knot. The wreck will be sunk in 35 m of water tonight or tomorrow morning, about 37 n-miles south of Koh Samed, Rayong Province, and 37 n-miles west of Ko Chang. The Thai navy will make a final search for the bodies of eight crewmen missing since the ship's first sinking in 1996, and then open the vessel's valves to release about 30 tonnes of remaining gas before allowing the vessel to sink.

## Harlinger waterscouts moeten schip verkopen

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*Harlingen* – Waterscoutingvereniging Caspar di Robles in Harlingen ziet zich gedwongen haar wachtschip **Antonius** te verkopen. Een wijziging in de Binnenschepenwet maakt deze stap noodzakelijk, zegt voorzitter C. Elzinga.

Elzinga: „Het is plotseling niet meer toegestaan het wachtschip tegen vergoeding aan anderen uit te lenen. Daardoor kunnen we de Antonius niet meer haar eigen onderhoudskosten terug laten verdienen, zoals voorheen wel kon.”

De Harlinger waterscouts verhuurden hun schip de afgelopen twee jaar telkens drie weken aan de IFKS. Ze fungeerde dan als volgschip tijdens het skûtsjesilen. „Dat bracht jaarlijks zo'n vijfduizend euro op”, vertelt Elsinga, „voldoende voor het onderhoud. Maar die inkomsten zijn we nu dus kwijt.”

Als genoemd bedrag structureel beschikbaar zou zijn dan zou men zonder problemen kunnen blijven varen, benadrukt Elsinga. De Harlinger Waterscouts varen nu twee jaar met de Antonius. Met eigen krachten kon men het wachtschip telkens laten voldoen aan de eisen die Scheepvaart Inspectie en Scouting Nederland speciaal voor scoutingschepen hebben opgesteld. Het schip wordt gebruikt om 's zomers onder meer de Friese meren op te trekken waarbij ze als uitvalsbasis dient voor de scouts, die er ook op overnachten. Elsinga weet zeker dat ook elders in het land waterscoutgroepen tegen hetzelfde probleem oplopen. „Dat zijn er zeker vijftig.” De afgelopen maanden is door het bestuur van Caspar di Robles intensief gezocht naar mogelijkheden het schip voor de vereniging te behouden. Elsinga: „Maar steeds weer moesten we de conclusie trekken dat we in deze situatie niet om verkoop van het schip heen kunnen.”

Verkoop van het schip is voor de Harlinger scouts de enige manier om het verenigingsleven de komende jaren zeker te stellen. Wat de toekomst betreft bestaat de hoop dat er na verkoop financiële ruimte ontstaat voor nieuwe watersportactiviteiten binnen de vereniging, zodat er uiteindelijk niet enkel verlies maar ook winst uit deze ontwikkeling kan worden gehaald.

## Voormalige Greenpeaceboot krijgt in Schiedam vierde leven

**Schiedam** - Het gaat goed met de restauratie van de voormalige zeesleper Elbe in de Wiltonhaven in Schiedam. „Uiterlijk is dat nog niet echt zichtbaar, maar inwendig begint onze eigen logistiek gestalte te krijgen,” zegt Cor Lieverst. „Het is voornamelijk nog opruimen en schoonmaken geblazen, want het schip is behoorlijk uitgewoond.”



Behalve de machinekamer. „Tsjja,” verklaart de 59-jarige Lieverst met een veelzeggend handgebaar, „op het schip zaten actievoerders, die gaan toch anders om met een schip. Behalve met de machinekamer, daar zie je dat de motoren heel goed zijn onderhouden. De oude beesten lopen nog als een zonnetje.”

**Links : de Elbe in de Wilton haven - ( Photo : Jan Simons )**

Het schip werd begin januari door Greenpeace, dat een nieuw actieschip in bedrijf had genomen, overgedragen aan het Maritiem Buitenmuseum Rotterdam en het dagelijkse beheer en exploitatie aan de Stichting Maritieme Collectie Rijnmond (SMCR). Vanwege

onvoldoende diepgang in de Leuvehaven, kreeg de Elbe in de Wiltonhaven in Schiedam aan de kade van Huisman-Itrec een ligplaats.

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Daar blijft het voorlopig liggen. De eerste tijd richt de vrijwilligersgroep zich op het maken van plannen voor de restauratie en het bijeen krijgen van de benodigde 2,5 miljoen euro. In deze eerste fase is een twintigtal mensen druk doende het schip te conserveren. De echte restauratieklus moet op een werf gebeuren, bijvoorbeeld voor het verwijderen van het helikopterdek.

De vrijwilligers hebben zich als deadline ten doel gesteld 24 februari 2009, de vijftigste verjaardag van de doop. „De Elbe kan dan aan een vierde leven beginnen,” zegt Hans van der Sluis. De 57-jarige Rotterdammer werkt als scheepvaartmeester zee op de Havendienst 18. „Toen ik jong was wilde ik dolgraag naar zee, maar ik mocht niet van mijn ouders. Want zeelui waren dronkelappen en hoerenlopers.”

Via baantjes op een scheepswerf en in de binnenvaart kwam Hans als dekknecht bij het Havenbedrijf. Sinds jaren besteedt hij een groot deel van zijn vrije tijd bij het Maritiem Buitenmuseum. „Zo'n sleper als de Elbe, dat trekt,” verklaart hij zijn inzet.

Is het bij Cor en Hans nog jeugdsentiment, bij de 21-jarige Ger van der Linden, matroos op de Havendienst 15, ligt dat anders. „Ik zag het schip twee jaar geleden op de Wereldhavendagen en was er meteen aan verslingerd. Ik heb een tijdje gevaren op een chemicaliëntanker, maar altijd interesse gehad in de zeesleepvaart.”

Men wil het schip gaan inzetten bij maritieme manifestaties en een vaste ligplaats geven in het centrum van Rotterdam. Het schip krijgt daar een educatieve functie, waarschijnlijk langs de kade van de Boompjes. „Maar dat is toekomstmuziek,” zwakt Lieverst af. „Er moet nog ontzettend veel werk worden verzet voordat die mijlpaal in zicht komt.”

Tijdens de Wereldhavendagen zal de Elbe naar alle waarschijnlijkheid te bezichtigen zijn. „Wellicht kan het achterdek die dagen ook dienst doen als podium voor zangkoren of muziekgroepen,” doet Van der Sluis verder uit de doeken.

De 58 meter lange zeesleper Elbe werd in 1959 in dienst genomen door L. Smit & Co's Internationale Sleepdienst. Het was de glorie tijd van de Nederlandse zeesleepvaart. De Elbe was geruime tijd de sterkste sleepboot ter wereld. Vanaf 1976 deed het schip dienst als loodsboot in Baltimore en sinds 1985 als actieschip van Greenpeace. Het is de enige zeesleper uit de periode van de wederopbouw die niet ten prooi is gevallen aan de slopershamer.

## CASUALTY REPORTING

### AN TAI (People's Republic of China)

Yokohama, Mar 6 — General cargo *An Tai* (931 gt, built 1986) was in contact with a Nippon Steel berth during departure from Kita-Kyushu Mar 2, causing damage to her stern. — Lloyd's Agents. .

### ANTHINEAS (France)

Brest, Mar 6 — Fishing *Anthineas* completed repairs and sailed Douarnenez at 2000, local time, Feb 12, bound fishing grounds. — Lloyd's Agents.

### ASFALTAR (Greece)

London, Mar 6 — Lloyd's Casualty representatives in Greece, report: At 2305, local time, Mar 5, tank *Asfaltar* (1,694 gt, built 1969), Preveza for Eleusis, with nine crew and two passengers, in ballast, grounded in the area of the Preveza Canal. Vessel refloated under her own power after 50 minutes and returned to the port of Preveza. The port authorities of Preveza have prohibited departure pending issue of a safety certificate by the marine inspectorate.

### BLACK PRINCE (Bahamas)

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London, Mar 6 — Following received from the agents of passenger *Black Prince*, timed 1115, UTC: Efforts are in hand at this moment to refloat *Black Prince*. All passengers were taken off safely by tenders yesterday without any problems. The passengers were bused to Havana and will be flying home to London at 1600, local time, today. London, Mar 6 — Following received from the agents of passenger *Black Prince*, timed 1445, UTC: *Black Prince* is still aground. The vessel was moved slightly at 1200, UTC. Another two larger tugs have been engaged and another refloating attempt will be made at 1800, UTC.

### **CELESTIAL DAWN (Republic of Ireland)**

London, Mar 5 — Following received from Coastguard Valentia MRSC, timed 1624, UTC: Fishing *Celestial Dawn* has been taken off the rocks at the entrance to Dingle Harbour, where she ran aground Feb 2. She is presently on route to Ventry Harbour, County Kerry, by crane barge *Norma*, ETA 1730, UTC.

### **EVAGGELISTRIA (Greece)**

London, Mar 6 — Lloyd's Casualty representatives in Greece report : At 1145, Mar 5 fire broke out in the engine-room of ferry *Evaggelistria*, Piraeus Registry 2515, while she was moored at the quay of the Holy Monastery of St. Paul, Mount Athos. According to the master of the vessel, the fire was caused by a short circuit during the changing of a fuse in the electrical panel of the engine-room. The fire was extinguished by the crew using vessel's own means and with the assistance of a firefighting truck from the monastery. There were no injuries to the crew and no pollution caused due to the incident. The Port Authority of Lerissos has prohibited the departure of the vessel after carrying out the pre-investigation. According to the master, the vessel will be towed to Volos for repairs after obtaining the necessary permit.

### **JANINA (St. Vincent & Grenadines)**

Sunderland, Mar 4 — General cargo *Janina* sailed Sunderland on Mar 3, bound Moerdijk (where she arrived Mar 4.) — Lloyd's Sub-agents.

### **MAPINDUZI (Tanzania)**

Nicosia, Mar 6 — A press report, dated Feb 25, states: General cargo *Mapinduzi* (3999 gt, built 1974), owned by the Zanzibar government, has resumed service between Zanzibar and the Tanzania mainland ports of Tanga, Dar es Salaam, Lindi and Mtwara after a two-year suspension. She was "grounded" because of mechanical defects. The vessel underwent a major overhaul and repairs in drydock at the African Marine Shipping Yard in Mombasa for four months last year at a cost then of Tsh420 million (\$600,000). *Mapinduzi* was forced to suspend services to the mainland in August 2000 after she became unseaworthy. The general manager of the Zanzibar Shipping Corporation, Captain Masudi Sururu said this was the second time the vessel had undergone a major overhaul since she commenced plying Tanzania territorial waters. The vessel will make a monthly trip to Lindi and Mtwara and carry a maximum cargo of 4,858 tonnes and a crew of 55. The resumption of *Mapinduzi's* services to southern regions is a relief for Lindi and Mtwara



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passengers who depend on water transport as their only means of transportation from the south to Dar es Salaam. Roads between the two regions become impassable during the rain seasons. — Lloyd's List Correspondent. (Note — *Mapinduzi* was reported at Mombasa on Jul 2, 2001, and was first reported arriving back at Dar es Salaam, and re-introduction to service, on Dec 13.)

### NILOS (Greece)

Ravenna, Feb 25 — Tank *Nilos* sailed Ravenna on Feb 20, for orders. — Lloyd's Sub-agents.

### PRINSESSE RAGNHILD (Norway)



London, Mar 6 — Ferry operator Color Line has temporarily cancelled all services between Kiel and Oslo with passenger ro/ro *Prinsesse Ragnhild* so that she can repair damages to the vessel caused by a fire last Friday. Dieter Kindermann, spokesman for Color Line, said that the ferry would remain berthed in Kiel until Mar 13 at least so that crews from Blohm & Voss could replace damaged electrical cable. He added that all passengers who had reservations for trips on the ferry

were being notified of the temporary service cancellation if they did not know about it already. According to Color Line, a fire broke out in the engine-room of *Prinsesse Ragnhild* at around 0100 Friday while the vessel was en route to Kiel from Oslo. Color Line said that within 15 minutes from the outbreak of fire, the vessel's engine was shut down and the fire was brought under control. The 965 passengers and 167 staff on board the ferry were immediately alerted, it said, adding that there were no injuries. The company attributed the cause of the fire to a defective fuel pipe leading to one of the vessel's main engines. (See issue of Mar 6.)

### SAILING NO.2 (St. Vincent & Grenadines)

Yokohama, Mar 6 — General cargo *Sailing No.2* (1292 gt, built 1983) was in contact with Kudamatsu No.2 public berth while berthing Feb 28 causing cracking and denting damage to stern approximately 80 cm above waterline. — Lloyd's Agents.

### SEABOARD EXPRESS (Panama)



London, Mar 6 — A press report, dated today, states: Agents found more than two tons of marijuana worth \$4 million hidden in a container of yams on a vessel from Jamaica, the US Customs Service said. A drug-sniffing dog alerted Customs inspectors to the shipment as it was being taken off ro/ro *Seaboard Express* (17828 gt, built 1980) at the Port of Miami on Thursday (Feb 28), officials said in a news release. More than 100 boxes of yams contained plastic-and-tape-wrapped bricks of marijuana weighing 4,344 pounds and valued at more than \$4 million wholesale, agents said.

*Seaboard Express* had arrived on Feb 28 from Kingston, Jamaica.

### TROPICAL (Portugal)

### KUSWAG ONE

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London, Mar 6 — A press report, dated Mar 5, states: Attempts to tow trawler *Tropical* to Durban after she lost power six nautical miles off Port St Johns late last night, would hopefully be made later on today. Earlier in the day *Kuswag One* attached a tow rope to the 36-metre trawler with nine crewmen on board, but the tow rope got entangled in the propeller of the tow vessel. Dave Murray, a spokesperson for salvage company Smit Pentow Marine, said divers were on their way to the scene to untangle the tow rope. He said *Tropical* was anchored and the vessel was not in any danger. Another tug was on her way from Richards Bay to assist if necessary. The trawler and *Kuswag One* are presently about six nautical miles south of Coffee Bay, 70 nautical miles north-east of East London. (See issue of Mar 6.)

### ULSAN SPIRIT (Bahamas)

Abu Dhabi, Feb 25 — Tank *Ulsan Spirit* sailed from Jebel Dhanna on Feb 21, bound Australia. — Lloyd's Agents. (See issue of Feb 18.)

### VISSERSBANK (Netherlands)

London, Mar 5 — Reported general cargo *Visserbank* arrived Ruisbroek on Feb 27 and sailed on Mar 1, for Egersund. (See issue of Feb 5.)

## SHIPYARD NEWS

### Incat to lay off workers



Tasmanian shipbuilder, Incat has asked workers at its cash strapped Hobart shipyard to consider voluntary redundancies. The yard has had only one contract in the past 15 months. A company spokesman said the company has no planned target for the number of redundancies and that workers could re-apply when more contracts are secured.

Over 200 shipyard workers were made redundant last year. Apprentices were suspended for two weeks in February to cut costs and minimize production. The Australian Manufacturing Workers Union said they were disappointed over the recent call for redundancies at the yard and proposed voluntary redundancies to allow workers with some control while helping Incat.

### 'Stekker eruit bij Oceanco'

**Alblasserdam** - Scheepswerf Oceanco in Alblasserdam verkeert volgens de vakbond FNV in moeilijkheden. Na de afbouw van een luxe jacht van tachtig meter lengte zou de werf geen werk meer hebben en zou volgens bestuurder W. Dijkhuizen de stekker eruit kunnen gaan.

Aanleiding voor de vrees is dat de werf, die 120 mensen in dienst heeft, een ploeg van dertig mensen uitbesteedt aan Bayards Constructions in Nieuw Lekkerland. „En die groep vormt het hart van Oceanco,” zegt Dijkhuizen. „Daarom willen wij van de directie weten waar het op staat. Die heeft tot nog toe niet gereageerd.”

FNV Bondgenoten had vanmorgen een personeelsvergadering bij de werf belegd om het personeel te

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informereren. Het personeel zou zich moeten uitspreken over de vraag of het luxe jacht al dan niet zou moeten worden afgebouwd.

Financieel-directeur J.B. van der Vegt van Oceanco noemt de conclusies van FNV Bondgenoten voorbarig. „We zijn bezig met een toekomstplaatje, maar daar willen we nu geen commentaar op geven,” zegt hij. Het uitbesteden van de constructieploeg noemt hij logisch: „Omdat Oceanco een afbouwwerf is en dat nooit anders is geweest. We hebben de afgelopen jaren wegens de vele orders extra mensen aangenomen, maar nu gaan we terug naar onze kernactiviteit, het afbouwen van casco's.”

De uitbesteding naar Bayards is volgens Van der Vegt inmiddels in goede harmonie met de ondernemingsraad en de vakbonden afgesproken.

## ROUTE, PORTS & SERVICES

### Hutchison sees off Philippines rivals in Thailand

HONG Kong's Hutchison Port Holdings will now run the new container terminal at Laem Chabang, due to start operations in May, after buying a majority stake in its operator Thai Laem Chabang Terminal Co. TLCT had been considering an offer from Philippine investors before Hutchison stepped in with a stronger bid. The company has the thirty-year lease on the A2 box terminal at Laem Chabang

### February good for PSA



SINGAPORE'S port operator PSA Group has seen the strong growth in throughput it saw in January continue into last month, with year-to-date growth now standing at 14.9%. The company puts the slightly slower performance in February down to the effect of the lunar New Year holidays. PSA's Singapore container terminals handled 1.25m teu in February, while its overseas facilities dealt with 300,000 teu.

### Alang suffers in domestic turmoil

THE world's largest ship-breaking centre, in Gujarat's Alang, is facing a double whammy from a glut of beached vessels and domestic violence. Breakers who got wind of the basic customs duty increase from five to 15 per cent in India's budget, bought and stocked scrapped ships well before the budget was unveiled on February 28, breakers' president Pravin Nagarsheth told Fairplay. Alang saw record tonnage beached for demolition in February – almost





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double that beached in previous months, at 415,000 LDT. Added to this, the Gujarat transport industry has suffered badly in communal riots which have claimed over 500 lives and burned out over 1,000 trucks across the state. Goods are not moving and business at Alang is at a standstill, with huge piles of merchandise awaiting removal. Breakers are also facing a major financial crunch as breaking activity is in full swing, adding to the stockpiles, but banks are refusing financing and salary payments.

( SEE TODAYS SPECIAL REPORT ABOUT ALANG – BELOW )

## Indonesia stresses piracy combat

INDONESIA is committed to a regional effort to combat maritime piracy and armed robbery, communications minister Agum Gumelar said today. However, he added that the country's geography brought inherent difficulties. Opening an experts' meeting on combating maritime piracy and armed robbery in Jakarta, he stressed Indonesia's commitment to exploring and identifying more areas of co-operation. "With respect to the geographic situation, condition and structure of the Indonesian area, ... it is a very hard job to provide maritime safety and law enforcement both in port area and at sea." Indonesia is the world's largest archipelago, dotted with 17,508 islands over a "water area" of 7.9M km<sup>2</sup>. According to the London-based International Maritime Bureau, which monitors piracy incidents, Indonesian waters continued to be the most dangerous in 2001, with 91 attacks reported. Hiroshi Terashima, executive director of the Nippon Foundation, proposed an international organisation of 'coastal and user states' be set up to specifically tackle piracy in the Malacca Straits.

## Adsteam towage price rises

Australia's Minister for Transport and Regional Services, John Anderson, has condemned Adsteam's decision to implement towage price increases ranging from 11.7 to 26.2 per cent in five of Australia's major ports.

Mr Anderson said he was surprised and disappointed that Adsteam has completely ignored the recent ACCC response to the price increases proposed by Adsteam. The company has decided to implement them in full at this time, pre-empting the Productivity Commission's inquiry into Harbour Towage and Related Services.

The Productivity Commission has been directed to complete its inquiry within six months, meaning the report would be finalised by August. Mr Anderson said at the time the ACCC's response to Adsteam proposed price hikes and the Productivity Commission inquiry were announced on 20 February, he asked Adsteam to defer implementing price increases given the ACCC's view that none were warranted at this time and the inquiry was pending.

Mr Anderson said he was particularly concerned about Adsteam's action given its virtual monopoly of towage services in Australia's capital city and regional ports. There is now a likelihood these price rises will flow on to the other ports not subject to the price monitoring provisions of the Prices Surveillance Act, and more broadly damage Australia's global competitiveness.

The Government had decided to instigate an inquiry through the Productivity Commission. The inquiry would explore the structural issues associated with the provision of towage services in Australian ports, examine whether declaration of harbour towage services is still warranted and recommend alternative arrangements if appropriate. It also has the scope to deliver an independent assessment of the costs associated with the provision of towage services.

Mr Anderson urged Adsteam to reconsider its decision to introduce the price increases, to actively

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participate in the Productivity Commission inquiry and take account of its report before determining its final position on price increases.

### Binnen drie jaar besluit over verdiepen Westerschelde

Vlissingen - Nederland en Vlaanderen onderzoeken de komende twee jaar of de Westerschelde verder kan worden verdiept. De partijen stellen een maatschappelijke kosten-batenanalyse en een milieueffectrapport (mer) op. Daarna moet de politiek binnen negen maanden een besluit nemen over al dan niet verdiepen. Minister Netelenbos (Verkeer en Waterstaat), staatssecretaris De Vries en de Vlaamse minster S. Stevaert hebben maandagavond in Vlissingen een memorandum ondertekend met die strekking. De studies richten zich op drie scenario's: vasthouden aan de huidige diepgang, een verdere verdieping met 0,90 meter of van 1,25 meter. Verder moet de studie duidelijkheid geven over de mogelijkheid van een open verbinding tussen Ooster- en Westerschelde. Dat zou hoogwaterstanden bij stormvloed kunnen verminderen. Ook moet er een natuurontwikkelingsplan voor de Scheldemond komen.

Daarnaast staan in het memorandum afspraken om de koppeling van loodsgeldtarieven voor de Scheldevaart en Rotterdam per 1 januari 2008 af te schaffen. In een tweede memorandum zijn de partijen maandagavond overeengekomen de risico's van gevaarlijke stoffen op de Beneden-Zeeschelde en Westerschelde tot een aanvaardbaar niveau terug te brengen. De Zeeuwse commissaris van de koningin Van Gelder en gouverneur van Antwerpen Paulus nemen daarin een coördinerende rol op zich.

Zij zoeken daarbij vooral naar oplossingen voor de gevaarlijke ammoniaktransporten op de Westerschelde. Daarnaast moeten de huidige rampbestrijdingsplannen voor de Beneden-Zeeschelde en de Westerschelde worden geactualiseerd.

## NAVY NEWS

### EXERCISE STRONG RESOLVE '02

Exercise Strong Resolve '02, one of the largest NATO exercises since the end of the cold war, began March 1 in Poland, Norway and the Baltic Sea. More than 26,000 military personnel from NATO and Partnership for Peace (PfP) nations are participating in the exercise, which encompasses two

simultaneous crises in separate geographical regions. Forces will encounter two types of NATO missions: an Article 5 collective defense operation and a crisis response operation (CRO).



Striking Fleet Atlantic (CSFL), commanded by Vice Adm. Cutler Dawson, is leading the CRO portion. That portion is being conducted in the Baltic

Sea and Poland, and involves a NATO-led Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) operating in and off the coast of the fictional nations of "Treeland" and "Woodland." CSFL is embarked aboard USS Mount Whitney (LCC 20), homeported in Norfolk, Va., operating as a sea-based CJTF headquarters platform.

"This is a great opportunity to train with our NATO and partner allies in a realistic environment," Dawson said. "The support from all of the nations involved has been outstanding, and I'm looking forward to a productive exercise that will provide beneficial training for all participants."

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For this exercise, the CSFL staff has been augmented by more than 450 personnel from all 19 NATO nations and 10 PfP nations, including Austria, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Slovak Republic, Romania, Slovenia and Sweden. PfP integration for Strong Resolve '02 is at the highest level for any exercise ever.

Mount Whitney received the additional personnel while in port in Kiel, Germany, over the past several days, and CSFL personnel provided them with a shipboard orientation and training on NATO operations and all facets of the upcoming exercise. Mount Whitney got underway from Kiel Feb. 28.

CSFL provides a sea-based CJTF capability for NATO, and provides a rapid, mobile and politically flexible platform for the command and control of multi-national forces.

In addition to USS Mount Whitney, other Norfolk-based units participating in the exercise include Destroyer Squadron 22, **USS Donald Cook (DDG 75)**, **USS Oscar Austin (DDG 79)**, **USS Briscoe (DD 977)**, **USS Hawes (FFG 53)**, and **USS Tortuga (LSD 46)**. The experimental vessel HSV (high speed vessel) Joint Venture, also based in Norfolk, are participating in the exercise as well.

## MOVEMENTS



The Belgian Navy vessel **A 962 BELGICA** receives a pilot offshore Hoek van Holland when she was bound for Scheveningen last weekend ( [Photo Ane Ree](#) )



The outward bound **DSND Mayo** is disembarking her Pilot to the tender **MERCURY** Thursday afternoon. ( [Photo : Piet Sinke](#) )

## RIJNMOND WEATHER

**9 uur 's ochtends:**

temperatuur: 6 graden  
kans op neerslag: 5%  
wind: matig (17 km/u) uit WZW

**5 uur 's middags :**

temperatuur: 11 graden  
kans op neerslag: 15%  
wind: matig (25 km/u) uit ZW

## .... SPECIAL REPORT ....

### ALANG : THE END OF THE LINE

**India: On a fetid beach, 35,000 men scrap the world's ships with little more than their bare hands. Despite wretched conditions, they say it is better to work and die than to starve and die.**

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ALANG, India -- This is where the world dumps its ships, worn out and ready to be torn apart.

To the left and right, ships lie stranded along six miles of beach, in a hundred stages of demolition. Tankers, freighters, fish processors and destroyers -- smashed, cut, rusting, smoking -- are packed close together. This is the end of the line.

Thirty-five thousand men have come to this once-deserted stretch on the Arabian Sea to labor for the shipbreakers. They live in hovels built of scrap, with no showers, toilets or latrines. They have come from poor villages on the other side of India, lured by wages that start at \$1.50 a day, to work at dangerous jobs, protected only by their scarves and sandals.

They suffer broken ankles, severed fingers, smashed skulls, malarial fevers, cholera, dysentery and tuberculosis. Some are burned and some are drowned. Nobody keeps track of how many die here from accidents and disease. Some say a worker dies every day.



**Grave danger:** In the scrapyards of Alang, workers die daily from accidents and disease.

"There is a shadow of death on this place," says Ram Lalit, a 22-year-old worker. "This place is haunted by death. But it is better to work and die than starve and die."

The U.S. Navy, which for years has insisted on scrapping its ships in the United States, now wants to send them abroad -- here to India, or to similar beachfronts in Pakistan or Bangladesh.

With its American scrapping program entangled in environmental and worker safety problems, criminal charges, bankruptcies and lawsuits, the Navy has decided to drop its old policy. To escape the turmoil in its domestic program, it could simply export its obsolete ships, laden with asbestos, PCBs, lead, toxic sludge and

other hazards to South Asia.



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The plan required the Navy to obtain an exemption from rules prohibiting the export of certain hazardous materials. The federal Maritime Administration, which owns a fleet of old cargo ships, tankers and other vessels, received a similar exemption.

With about 170 ships designated for scrapping, the Navy and Maritime Administration point to the higher prices the vessels can fetch abroad. But selling the ships overseas could put the U.S. government in the center of a growing debate over exploitation of Third World workers -- those who make the sneakers, clothes and toys to satisfy Western tastes, and receive the used car batteries, plastic bags and toxic chemicals that the West discards.

If they are sent to Alang, the U.S. government ships will join American merchant vessels that already come here. They will add to the long ranks of broken hulks -- from Norway, Japan, Greece, Russia -- that meet their end on the 190 plots here, where smoke and dust obscure the sun, and the crash of steel and the guttural rasp of the torches drown out any other sound.

The beached ships tower over the hundreds of workers who strip them apart, men who know they are expendable.

"All burden to the laborers and none to the owners," says Shive Cheren Bharti, 36, who has worked at Alang for 14 years. "There's no risk to them. If 20 people were to die at once, the owners wouldn't care."

Then, his face inexplicably lighting up in a big grin, he says, "We're the hopeless people of India."

### High tides, low beach

Alang exists because of the tide. It is one of those places -- like the Bay of Fundy in Canada -- where a host of geographical circumstances come together to create exceptionally large differences between the twice-daily high and low tides. Coupled with a soft, shelving beach, the tides at Alang make shipbreaking possible with a minimum of construction. There are no piers or drydocks. Ships are simply run onto the shore.

Giant merchant vessels powered by thunderous engines and navigated by satellite signals carry the goods and fuel that enable the modern technological world to exist.

Yet a ship ends its life at the hands of several hundred practically barefoot men, and the beginning of that process depends on the phase of the moon.

Twice a month, at the full moon and new moon, high tides are at their highest, and this is when a ship, be it 3,000 tons or 50,000 tons, can be driven the farthest onto the beach. And, just as a ship is launched with a bottle of champagne smashed across its bow, the dismantling begins with workers on the beach hacking open a coconut and offering a prayer for protection to the elephant god, Lord Ganesh.

But prayers aren't always enough.

On Jan. 8, the men at Plot 37 were cutting up a Greek freighter called the Vakis-T. Eight workers were cutting in a section at deck level.



**Giants of Alang:** Beached merchant vessels dwarf laborers who strip them. Tidal extremes and a gently shelving beach allow shipbreaking without piers or drydocks

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"I was two feet away," says Shiv Shankar, 38. "I was talking to them. The last thing I said was, 'Why don't you work faster? It's time to get this job over with.'" The whole section broke off and plunged 40 feet into the ship's hold. Three men died from head injuries. Five survived. None was wearing a hard hat. "This was God's will," says a supervisor, Toofani Bhai, 32. "Nothing could be done about it. I felt hurt -- it pained me. I was among those who picked up the bodies and put them on the ambulance."

"It was their call to death," says Shankar, with a shrug. But not everyone here is so accepting of fate.



**Heave:** A gang of workers strains to lift a steel plate onto a truck at Annapurna Shipbreakers in Alang. Indian shipbreakers are reaping a bonanza as the world's major tanker lines replace their fleets

"The joint that broke was almost rusted through," says a worker, Sita Ram. "The shipbreaker should have known it was weak. But the shipbreakers have no regard for life."

"Alang," he says, "is a colony of the dead -- breathing, walking dead men." After the section fell, the owner of the yard called for Alang's single ambulance. It happened to be available. Digvijay H. Sarviya, the driver, says that when he got to the accident scene it appeared that two men were dead and one was near death. He decided to load all three into the ambulance, because he wasn't sure.

"Giving first aid would consume too much time," he says. "I just rush them to the hospital."

Sarviya says he makes the 40-mile trip to the hospital in Bhavnagar once a day, sometimes twice. The drive, on a two-lane road clogged by trucks, scooters, tractors and cows, takes 90 minutes to two hours. When Sarviya reached the hospital, all three of his passengers were dead.

The Vakis-T accident was hardly the most serious at Alang.

"I've seen many worse accidents," says Bhai, the supervisor. "I've seen 15 men killed."

This year, a fire reportedly killed 18 men, and at least eight died in separate blazes. In the summer of 1995, up to 12 workers -- accounts vary -- were asphyxiated by ammonia on a Russian fish-processing ship. In 1988, a fire aboard a cargo vessel killed as many as 40 men.

Recently, the Red Cross opened a clinic at Alang, but doctors and nurses don't like to come here, so it is rarely open. Most injured workers are taken to the government hospital in Bhavnagar, but a handful of owners send injured workers to Dr. Dinkar Dholakia's orthopedic clinic there instead.

They are housed together in a basement room, where daylight hardly penetrates the small dirty windows. But everyone considers this better than the hospital.

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**Where the money is:** While everything aboard ships is scavenged, the money is in the metal. And the secret to making it is to break a ship and sell the steel quickly

without a detectable pulse when a pipe fell from a crane and hit him in the head. His future? "Let us all hope for the best," Dholakia says.

### Life in Alang

Workers in Alang begin stirring around 7:30 a.m.. Some wash from a bucket on the muddy ground outside their huts. Others squat by puddles, dipping toothbrushes in the yellow water and cleaning their teeth. There's early morning coughing all around.

At this hour, the chief activity is along the strip of shacks that serve the workers' needs: a barber's stall and a tailor's, a man who does laundry and a Muslim prayer leader, vendors who sell bicycle parts, kerosene lamps, sodas, cigarettes, fruit and eggs.

A small Hindu temple stands outside the gate to Plot 18. The temple is shaded by a neem tree, with two bells salvaged from ships hanging from a branch. It is one small reminder of a world, a life, that exists beyond the yards.

The men live in shacks they have built out of lumber harvested from the ships. The shacks are packed on the dunes behind the beach, separated by muddy alleys. Four or eight or 12 men might live in one shack. There is no furniture, no light, no water.

Sriram Prasad, 32, with dark hair brushed forward and a bushy mustache, counts himself among the lucky men of Alang. He lives in an 8-foot-square shack with three others. They sleep on a table. The walls are covered with newspapers; little triangles of colored paper hang from the ceiling. He has a wife and two sons back home. A brother and many of his neighbors work here. He gets the shack for free.

He says he has worked here 10 years. "It's hazardous -- we're always scared of getting hurt. I get bruised all the time, but I've been lucky and never seriously hurt.

"But I've seen so many people die. I've seen 100 people die before my eyes. It is just a matter of destiny."

This attitude infects seemingly everyone in Alang. Destiny brings men who otherwise could not support themselves to this fiery corner of India. Destiny wears them out and fills them with malaria. Destiny deprives them of decent sanitation. Destiny burns them and crushes them.

"The best thing is the money, which I wouldn't get anyplace else," says Prasad, "and the worst thing is not knowing how long you'll be alive."

Dr. Mukesh Shah says about 10 new patients arrive each month at the clinic. Many have anemia because of poor nutrition, and skin problems such as scabies because of poor hygiene and no laundering. Poor sanitation contributes to gastroenteritis. Many suffer from tuberculosis and alcoholism. About 40 percent of the patients have malaria, he says.

One patient, Vijay Shahu, 34, of Orissa, had been injured at Plot 88 when a steel plate crushed his right leg. He was in shock when he arrived and the doctors couldn't find a pulse. He will not be able to work at the yards anymore.

Ramesh Prajapati, 22, of Uttar Pradesh, was admitted

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### Little protection:

Upendra Parida uses rags to protect his hands from jagged edges as he lifts a piece of steel. Workers take few precautions in removing asbestos or other hazardous materials and nowhere in Alang, among tens of thousands of men, did anyone wear a hard hat, safety harness or respirator.

A single, heaving rutted road runs parallel to the beach. In the morning light, cows amble along looking for scraps of food. The trucks come to life; soon they'll be jostling for room and, later, the owners' Japanese four-wheel-drives will come blaring and darting among them.

The workday begins, no different from the day before or the day after. A cutter takes a torch to an engine room pipe, and residual oil inside bursts into flame. Nearby, smoke rolls from a smothered fire, mixing with the acrid fumes of burning steel and paint. A little farther off, a ship's deckhouse is pushed off its perch and plunges 70 feet to the hold below, with a crash that sends a huge dust cloud swirling.

Pairs of workers carry oxygen canisters on their shoulders, cushioning the load with their all-purpose safas, traditional Indian scarves. Gangs of a dozen or more men, plastic sandals on their feet, chant in unison and hoist heavy plates of steel onto their shoulders. Others heft cutting supplies alongside the beached ships, wading through muddy sand saturated with oil, dust, sludge and human excrement.

The scrapyards owners look on from their porches, sipping sweet milky tea. Walking to or from the yards, the men of Alang seem listless, worn out, beaten down. But they are diligent workers. At Plot 66, two men, facing each other, pull on the ends of a large hacksaw, like lumberjacks, cutting the copper pipes of a boiler. They've been at it since 3 p.m. the day before. They expect to finish toward sundown the next day.

Back and forth, in a patient trance, with an unvarying stroke, they pull at the saw.

"It's how we earn our bread," says Ram Sanwarey, 38.

### Sought-after ships

The most sought-after ships are those that fly the American flag. Greek tankers and Russian trawlers are the bread and butter of the scrapyards here, but a shipbreaker knows that a U.S. merchant vessel was built with high-grade steel, was well-maintained, and will be clean of grease and sludge when it arrives. It will be laden with asbestos and PCBs, but Indian shipbreakers do not worry about environmental damage or exposing their workers to hazardous substances. And, anyway, almost all the world's ships (except the newest) were built with asbestos and PCBs.

An American tanker called the Keystone Rhode Island arrived at Alang this year after three decades hauling oil. Owned by a shipping firm in Bala Cynwyd, Pa., the Rhode Island was sold through a New York broker to a middleman in Singapore, who sold it to a breaker here. It was one of several hundred ships that make their way to Alang every year through brokers in London and New York. In 1996, the brokers sold 464 ships for scrap, with 289 coming to India and most of the rest to Pakistan or Bangladesh. There are no reliable figures on the number of warships and commercial vessels -- mostly Russian -- sold outside the established brokerage system.



**To the dump:** A worker carries insulation stripped from the aircraft carrier USS Bennington down to the water's edge for disposal in the Arabian Sea



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The Rhode Island was built in Baltimore by Bethlehem Steel for the Texaco Oil Co. Launched in July 1964, the 604-foot tanker represented American shipbuilding in its prime. Texaco brought in dignitaries by train for the ceremony; Beth Steel threw a lunch afterward at the Sparrows Point Country Club.

The tanker had 90,000 feet of pipe and was covered with 8,500 gallons of lead-based paint. It was powered by big steam turbines, which the Indian shipbreakers treasure because of the high-priced specialty metals that went into their construction.

### Legacy of the Exxon Valdez



**Aboard the Bennington:** A worker perches on the remains of the USS Bennington, one of a handful of Navy vessels scrapped in Alang in recent years. But the Navy could soon send dozens of ships there.

Its demolition is part of a much larger story.

After the Exxon Valdez ran aground in Prince William Sound in Alaska in March 1989, spilling 11 million gallons of oil, the disaster led to stronger measures to protect the environment. Congress required new tankers to have double hulls -- one inside the other -- and outlawed the use of single-hulled tankers like the Exxon Valdez by 2010.

The result has been a bonanza for Indian shipbreakers, as the world's major tanker lines replace their fleets. There are about 6,700 tankers in the world. Each tanker scrapped in India (or in Pakistan or Bangladesh) means the wholesale release of oil, sludge, asbestos, PCBs and chromates onto the beach and into the water, and the

release of lead fumes into the air from burning paint. Each tanker scrapped translates into a dozen or more injuries among the workers, and an even chance that someone will be killed.

That is the last legacy of the Exxon Valdez.

With the Keystone Rhode Island, as with all ships here, the breakers begin cutting from the bow and work their way aft, leaving the bottom plates to the end. A tanker can be dismantled in about seven weeks; a warship takes considerably longer, because it is full of compartments and hard-to-cut armor plate.

Any equipment that can be reused is sold through secondhand dealers on the road from Bhavnagar. Buyers can find, in varying states of repair: sinks, toilets, chairs, mattresses, life jackets, china, telephones (with and without dials), lumber, doors, desks, fire hoses, colanders, mixers, pumps, water fountains, vacuum cleaners, refrigerators, washing machines, diesel engines and surgical tables.

One dealer had an American flag, in a heap on the ground, and a selection of pianos (including a Soviet Red October upright, badly out of tune).

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But items such as these account for only about 4 percent of a shipbreaker's income, said Bhavin Shah, overseer on the Keystone Rhode Island. The money is in the metal. And the secret to making it, he said, is to break the ship and sell the steel as quickly as possible.

The U.S. Navy, which could soon send dozens of ships here, has had a handful of vessels scrapped in Alang in recent years. The USS Bennington, for example, came here in 1995.



A company called Resource Recovery International paid \$200,000 to scrap the World War II-era ship in the United States. Then the company agreed to pay an additional \$1 million in return for being allowed to send the aircraft carrier to India. In December 1994, Resource Recovery sold the vessel to a middleman in England; the middleman then sold it to an Indian shipbreaker for a reported \$6 million.

The escalating resale price is explained by the lower costs South Asian shipbreakers incur -- and the higher profits they collect -- because they pay paltry wages and aren't hindered by tough safety and environmental regulations. The Defense Department did require Resource Recovery to submit a technical plan outlining how workers' safety and health would be protected. But the plan was meaningless. Rohit Bhatt, an official with the Alang scrapyard, said his company had no contact with anyone from the U.S. government or Resource Recovery.

On a visit to the site, Sun reporters saw about 400 workers cutting steel with torches and doing other work as they dismantled the Bennington. No special precautions were taken in removing asbestos or other hazardous materials.

In fact, nowhere in Alang, among the tens of thousands of men, did anyone wear a hard hat, safety harness or respirator, even though they are required by the Gujarat Factories Rules.

Under its new policy, the Navy wouldn't need to inquire about safety practices in India. Such formalities as existed in the Bennington project, at least on paper, would be swept away.

Overseas sales of U.S. warships became possible this summer after the Environmental Protection Agency gave the Navy an exemption from rules banning the export of ships containing PCBs, or polychlorinated biphenyls. They were widely used in electric insulators until the 1970s, when they were linked to serious health problems.

The export agreement requires the Navy to remove the most hazardous PCBs, those in liquid form. Most others, though used in thousands of ship parts, can remain.

Asbestos and other toxic substances are not addressed in the agreement, and the Navy is not required to remove them before exporting ships. The Maritime Administration, which owns a large fleet of obsolete merchant vessels, signed a similar agreement last month.



**Funeral in Alang:** To chants of "Ram, nam, satya hai," or "The Name of the Lord is the Truth," the body of Shahade Ram, wrapped in an orange shroud, is carried to the beach and placed on a funeral pyre of scrap lumber scavenged from the ships. The 35-year-old worker had complained of a cough and chest pain, and died hours earlier in his hut.

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Joan M. Bondareff, chief counsel for the maritime agency, says it is required to get the highest price possible for its ships; selling them overseas brings far more than selling them at home.

She describes the agreement as a "win-win" for the agency and the environment. "We can continue to export obsolete ships for scrapping and the environment is protected with the removal in the United States of PCBs," she says. Navy officials declined to be interviewed about overseas scrapping. But in a written statement, the Navy says the agreement "provides an opportunity for the Department of Defense to maximize the return to the U.S. Treasury from such sales."

Sen. John Glenn, an Ohio Democrat, is critical of the export plans. "While I understand the need for the Navy ... to be able to dispose of surplus craft in an expeditious and cost-effective manner, U.S. jobs and environmental problems should not be exported in the process," Glenn wrote recently to Navy Secretary John H. Dalton.

James Moorman, an environmental lawyer and former assistant U.S. attorney general, agrees.

"The Navy can manage things if they want to -- it appears they're just not interested," says Moorman. "This idea that we ship pollution problems to a Third World country strikes me as a serious mistake. It's the sort of thing our government shouldn't be doing."

### Where labor is cheap

It's not surprising that the shipbreaking industry developed in India. Labor is cheap. There's a domestic market for steel. The owners are driven. The workers and their few advocates are powerless. In a Third World nation beset by corruption, poverty and overpopulation, government regulation is ineffectual.

Alang is so remote that few people other than workers or owners ever make their way here. Local officials say the industry, which started in 1983, is only now maturing. While there have been plans for several years to create a development authority to build housing, schools and a hospital, nothing has come of them. The workers, left to fend for themselves, have nowhere to turn when disabled by illness or accident. Everywhere in Alang are men who are too hurt to work but are hanging on, hoping for a settlement from their bosses.

Sanjay Tatoba, 26, of Maharashtra, was asked one morning why he was not working. He raised his left hand. Two fingers were missing. "I feel it should not have happened, but who should I direct my anger against?" he says.

Under Indian law, men who are injured and the families of those killed are entitled to compensation from the owner. In practice, they have to prepare themselves for a long wait. Just ask Pradeep K. Thakkar, a robust lawyer who is one of the very few and very lonely advocates for the workers at Alang. Thakkar represents more than 300 Alang workers or their families before the Labor Court in Bhavnagar. It has just one judge and a backlog of 10,000 cases. Prospective clients can find Thakkar at his office on lawyers' row in Bhavnagar. They must first climb stairs so steep that a knotted rope is provided to hang onto.

Thakkar is a forceful and unstoppable speaker. He chews betel nuts constantly, which stain his mouth red. He sits by a row of open windows, in a tiny, narrow office, spitting regularly out the window and working despite the constant din of horns, scooters, bicycle bells, cooing pigeons and slamming shutters from the street below. He keeps each case in a worn, folded manila cover, tied with faded red ribbon.

"There is no law," he shouts. "Shipbreakers are exploiting the workers. The government has no role."

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A sampling of his clients' cases shows how sluggish the legal system can be. There's Shantaram Sriram Jadav, who fell into the sea while climbing an anchor chain on July 20, 1994. He was presumed drowned. For two years, his widow and four daughters were promised compensation, but got nothing. Finally, they asked Thakkar to sue, seeking \$8,500, but they have not been able to raise the \$17 filing fee.

There's Birbal Mahato, who was asphyxiated Sept. 17, 1993, by a gas leak. Thakkar won the case, but has been unable to collect damages of \$4,500. The shipbreaker has offered to settle for less.

And there's Ram Nagina Toofani, who was burned to death on March 10, 1991. A suit filed July 22, 1991, has gone nowhere.

"Sometimes, I feel very frustrated," Thakkar says. "But I will continue my fight relentlessly."

On occasion, the state Labor Commission brings an action in criminal court when a worker dies.

"I can tell you no accident will go unpunished," says R.S. Vaghela, the labor commissioner. But not a single case, going back at least to 1989, has been resolved. No shipbreaker has ever been convicted.

The owners of the scrapyards operate with impunity. But they are a product of the system, not the creators of it. India rewards those who help themselves. "Naturally, the shipbreakers want to put labor into a better position," says H.K. Agrawal, one of the most prominent scrapyard owners in India.

Conditions are poor, he concedes. "But 15 years ago there was nothing. In my eyes, a lot has been done here. I tell you why I like this business -- I create jobs for 200 to 300 people and I run it like a family. If I do something like that, then I'm sure I'm getting some profit also."

The problems, he says, lie with the Gujarat Maritime Board. It is the responsibility of the board to worry about housing and sanitation. The shipbreakers donated about \$300,000 for housing to the board, and no one knows what has become of the money. The head of the local Maritime Board office, Agrawal complains, only gets in the way.

The accidents are regrettable, he says.

"But the worker knows, 'If I die, my family gets the money,'" he says. "This is in his mind. He tends to take risks, which he should not. Most accidents occur because workers are very keen to please the owners, and they are so loyal to the owners they want to finish the work quickly. This is the good side and the bad side."

Agrawal says he once worked in the yard himself, when his father ran it. "I have seen the ups and downs of life," he says. "There was a time in my life when I did not have enough for two square meals. I feel for the downtrodden." Clad in raw silk pajamas with gold buttons, Agrawal had welcomed a group of American visitors to his home in Bhavnagar. As celebrants blew horns and set off firecrackers beyond his garden wall -- it was marriage season in Gujarat -- private security guards lingered nearby.

His contemporary home sprawls: The black-and-white marble floor of Agrawal's living room was large enough to accommodate at least eight of his laborers' shacks in Alang.

Virtually all the owners at Alang are self-made men, and they want the world to know it.

### **'Maharajah style'**

"They like the flamboyant and a little bit of show," says Zarine Khan, a high-society Bombay interior decorator who has worked for about a dozen shipbreakers in Bhavnagar. "I'm catering to their tastes, and their tastes are pretty loud."



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They like a lot of marble, she says, and paint over expensive rosewood furniture to make it showier. Khan says the shipbreakers aspire to a "maharajah style." When she completed Agrawal's house several years ago, he threw a party for himself and invited 1,000 people.

Agrawal, in his mansion, and the hundreds of men who work for him, in their shacks, are a long way from Ahmedabad, the capital of Gujarat -- at least a six-hour drive over poor roads. Officials with the state labor commission there speak of conditions at Alang with certainty. They point to nine pages of detailed safety rules about shipbreaking. That the rules are unenforced was, apparently, beside the point.

But their boss, the commissioner, Vaghela, acknowledges that life and work at Alang could be better.

He talks about the jobs created and steel produced by the shipbreakers. (Shipbreaking accounts for about 7 percent of India's steel production, according to the steel ministry in New Delhi.) But he also talks about the health and safety problems at Alang. There are no death certificates issued when workers die of illness or are killed, and no single government agency believes itself to be responsible for conditions there.

There is, he says, one thing that the developed countries have a moral responsibility to do: Rid their ships of hazardous materials before sending them to India.

"Your country can afford all of this," he says. "It is a small thing they can do."

Is shipbreaking a net plus or minus for India? "Don't ask these questions," Vaghela says, shaking his head. "Only developing countries are doing this job. They need money." A worker's end

It is late morning and the laborers at Plot 37 have gathered outside the gate. Each man holds a plank on his shoulder. They begin walking, falling into a procession down the street, past the yards. They carry the boards like peasants with pitchforks, or soldiers with rifles. Others turn to watch, though they've seen this before.

A hundred men, swelling to 200, move determinedly down the street, quiet at first. Then the chanting begins. "Ram, nam, satya hai."

The Name of the Lord is the Truth.

At the front, wrapped in an orange shroud, they carry the body of Shahade Ram, 35, who had worked here five years. He had complained of a cough and chest pain. A self-styled doctor told him he would be fine and gave him a glucose injection. At 1 a.m. he had died in his hut. That was nine hours ago.

The men come to the place where Alang creek cuts through the dunes and enters the Bay of Cambay. Below the tide line, a small corral of timbers is driven into the sand. Inside it, the wood the men have been carrying is piled four feet high.

Traditionally, a body is burned with sandalwood, but here the men must use scrap lumber scavenged from the ships. There is no priest for a proper Hindu funeral, so a man who knows the ritual leads the ceremony, along with Ram's brother.

The body is placed on the pile. More boards are put on top, and large timbers are leaned against the pyre.

The smell of incense overpowers the smell of excrement (here, below the high-tide mark, is where the men come to defecate) and the acrid smell of smoke from the nearby plots.

There is a brief distraction: A fire at a plot 200 yards away has sent workers running in all directions. It ends with the concussive explosion of an oxygen canister.

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Seven men walk around the pyre, chanting, "Ram, nam, satya hai," and lighting the fire with burning bundles of reeds.

Bright orange flames leap from the pyre, and the men back away from the heat. A few leave. One rings a bicycle bell as he walks away.

The fire burns for a long time, until finally the tide comes in, washing away what little remains of Shahade Ram.

**HAVE A LOOK AT THE FOLLOWING *SITES* FOR SHIPPING INFO AND PICTURES OF SHIPS  
AROUND HOEK VAN HOLLAND AT :**

<http://www.scheepvaarthoek.nl>

&

<http://www.mcf-rotterdam.nl>