

# Bangladeshi shipbreakers prepare for High Court hearing

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London

It is hoped that a set of rules that could remove the ongoing threat to ship recycling in Bangladesh will get High Court approval in the next couple of weeks.

Final amendments are being made to what is titled the Ship-breaking and Recycling Rules 2011 for presentation to the court on 10 October, just two days before a 12 October deadline expires for vessel imports.

Various government bodies and the Bangladesh Ship Breakers' Association (BSBA) have formulated the rules, which follow pressure by the Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers' Association (BELA) over safety and environmental conditions at the yards.

The government has secured repeated court extensions to complete its rules and guidelines, with the industry living since earlier this year under the threat of another forced closure. Previously, it was shut down for 10 months.

Captain Anam Chowdhury, advisor to the BSBA, told TradeWinds earlier this week that the rulebook was close to completion.

He claims many of the yards have already done a "huge amount of infrastructure" investment, including amenities for the workers and waste-storage facilities.

"There has been a massive development and I think it has cost the shipbreakers a fortune," he said.

This has not been independently verified and even Chowdhury concedes that more needs to be done and the yards allowed the necessary time.

"We can't build Rome in a day," he said. "But I think we are heading in a positive direction."

## Captain Anam

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**CAPTAIN ANAM CHOWDHURY: Advisor to the BSBA** Photo: Elisabeth Tchoudjinnoff

Chowdhury says central to development of the rules has been Bangladesh's need to comply with the new IMO Hong Kong Convention for the safe and environmentally sound recycling of vessels.

Many of the yards, heavily criticised in the past over the frequency of fatal accidents, are claimed to now have ISO 30000 accreditation, which specifies ship-recycling management system requirements.

There have also been moves toward setting up a central ship-recycling authority in Bangladesh to regulate the sector. Currently, various ministries have responsibilities, including industry and environment.

Chowdhury says there is concern that the authority is given sufficient powers.

Asked how confident he is of the High Court sanctioning the new industry rule book, Chowd-

hury added: "I think they have no option but to accept."

Meanwhile, he confirms that Bangladesh inspectors have been asked to examine the Chinese-owned, 70,876-dwt *Asia Union* (built 1982), which it has been claimed contains various hazardous substances.

But Chowdhury argues that given the restrictions and court cases surrounding ship recycling it is unlikely anyone would at-

tempt to import a vessel into Bangladesh that posed numerous hazards.

He points also to the fact that the *Asia Union* is a bulker and not a storage tanker or other type of vessel that may typically present problems.

"People are fishing in muddy waters," claimed Chowdhury of complaints that Bangladesh is again being used as a dumping ground for waste.

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