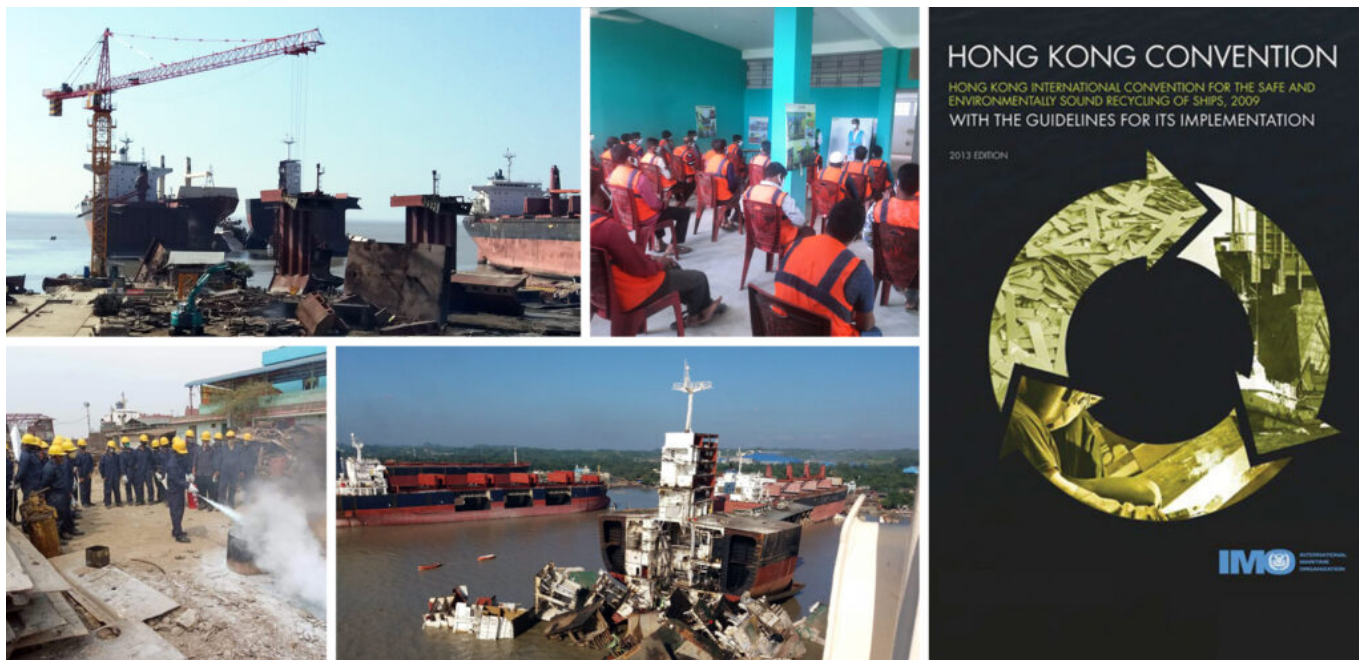


# The Hong Kong Convention and Role of Bangladesh and India

written by Ezba Walayat | July 11, 2023



## Introduction

The Hong Kong Convention (HKC) for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships is an international treaty that sets standards for the recycling of ships at the end of their operational lives. The HKC was adopted in May 2009 by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and entered into force on June 26, 2023. It means that the convention is now legally binding on the countries that have ratified it. The HKC was developed in response to concerns about the environmental and safety risks associated with shipbreaking. Shipbreaking is the process of dismantling ships at the end of their operational lives, the ships are dismantled and processed to recover materials, primarily steel. It is a complex and hazardous process, and it can release hazardous materials into the environment, including asbestos, heavy metals, and other pollutants. The HKC aims to address these concerns by setting standards for the recycling of ships. Moreover, as per the convention, the ships will be recycled in facilities that have been approved by the recycling state or the flag state. The role of Bangladesh and India, two of the world's top ship breaking or recycling countries, is given here.

## Role of Bangladesh

Bangladesh ratified the Hong Kong Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships (HKC) on June 26, 2023. By ratifying the Hong Kong Convention, Bangladesh, one of the world's major ship recyclers, will play a crucial role in paving the path for safe and responsible ship recycling practices. The ship recycling sector has significantly boosted Bangladesh's economy. In the northern coastal region of Chittagong, there are approximately 150 shipbreaking yards, of which 50 to 60 yards are active throughout the year, according to Shipbreakingbd. Additionally, the sector is giving thousands of individuals in the nation's poor regions access to jobs. Through its Ship Recycle Act, which incorporates the

terms of the HKC into national legislation, Bangladesh committed in 2018 to ratify the Convention by 2023. The act also mandates shipbreaking yards in Bangladesh to have safety equipment and to train workers in safe shipbreaking environment. After ratification, Bangladesh has begun the process of improving its recycling capacity with the adoption of the Ship Recycle Act. The government has also announced plans to invest in new technologies for ship recycling. These investments will help Bangladesh to meet the requirements of the HKC and to become a more sustainable and safer shipbreaking country which will also help in economic growth.

## **Role of India**

India is one of the world's leading ship recycling countries. India ratified the Hong Kong Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships (HKC) on November 28, 2019. This made India one of the first countries to ratify the convention. After ratification, the Recycling of Ships Bill, 2019, was passed by India and, on 13 December, 2019 upon the President of India's approval it became an Act. The government made the decision to introduce this Act to regulate ship recycling by establishing specified international criteria and establishing the legal framework for their enforcement. Ship recycling laws are important not only to protect human health and the environment, but also to improve the safety of shipbreaking workers.



The Indian shipbreaking industry is concentrated in Gujarat and Alang, which is known as the shipbreaking capital of the world. India's role in the HKC is important because it is one of the world's leading shipbreaking countries. As of 2020, the country accounted for about 35% of the global shipbreaking tonnage. But, the country has been criticized for its environmental and safety practices. Therefore, the Indian Government should increase its enforcement efforts to ensure that shipbreaking yards are complying with the law. As a ratifying country, India can play a crucial role in the effective implementation of the Hong Kong Convention. With its significant share in the global shipbreaking tonnage, India has the

opportunity to lead by example and set safety measures for shipbreaking workers as well as high standards for ship recycling practices in order to make a significant positive impact in shipbreaking industry.

## **Conclusion**

The Hong Kong Convention has the potential to make a significant positive impact in global ship recycling industry. India and Bangladesh are two of the world's leading shipbreaking countries, and their ratification of the Hong Kong Convention (HKC) is a significant step towards ensuring that ships are recycled in a safe and environmentally sound manner. By joining the Hong Kong Convention, both India and Bangladesh have committed to improve their ship recycling practices to align with international standards. This development is expected to bring about positive changes in the industry. Also, the future of the global ship recycling industry will depend on factors like, the willingness of governments, ship-owners, and ship breakers to comply with the HKC's provisions, the development of new technologies for ship recycling. The convention provides a framework for ship recycling practices on a global scale, and ensure that every country follow same standards and regulations. To conclude, the Hong Kong Convention will promote global coordination and collaboration in the exchange of best practices and the resolution of common ship recycling issues. The future of the ship recycling industry, the health of shipbreaking workers, protection of the environment, and the advancement of sustainable resource management will all depend on the successful implementation of the Hong Kong Convention.