



**PERILOUS:** Accidents at ship-recycling facilities in Chattogram claimed the lives of 13 workers during 2021

Photo: Stephane M Grueso/Creative Commons

# Recyclers call for cash-buyer clean-up after blast on VLCC

## Bangladesh association threatens ban on outfits that cut tank-cleaning corners

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The Bangladesh Shipbreakers & Recyclers Association will issue an ultimatum to cash buyers following several serious fires and an explosion on tankers that had been poorly cleared of gas and oil residue prior to beaching.

At a meeting planned for next week, the association will issue a written warning to all cash buyers who sell ships to recycling facilities in Chattogram, putting them on notice that they will be officially banned from doing business in the country if they are caught delivering vessels that have not been properly cleaned and made gas-free.

The decision to take such

action comes on the heels of an explosion on 25 December aboard a VLCC that was being cut up.

Sources have identified the tanker as the 310,000-dwt Jubilant (built 1996), a vessel that had been used in a storage role under the name Jubilee Star by Thailand's Nathalin Group prior to it being sold for recycling in August.

Four workers suffered severe burns according to official reports. Two remain in hospital, both in critical condition.

However, some media reports claim that at least one worker has died. This has been denied by senior managers at the Jamuna Ship-breaking Yard, where the Jubilant was being recycled.

The accident is just one of a string of similar incidents at

Bangladeshi ship-recycling facilities that, according to the country's Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments, have led to the death of 13 yard workers in 2021 alone.

Many more yard workers have been injured.

### DEATH COUNT

Government data indicates that 156 workers have been killed at ship-recycling facilities over the past decade.

Mohammed Zahirul Islam, vice president of the Bangladesh Shipbreakers & Recyclers Association, told TradeWinds that a recent spate of incidents involving tankers is believed to be due to cash buyers cutting corners when cleaning vessels prior to delivery.

"It is the responsibility of the cash buyer to deliver vessels that are safe for human entry and safe for hot work," said Islam, who is managing director of PHP Shipbreaking and Recycling Industries, Bangladesh's only recycling facility that is in compliance with the Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships.

"Shipbreakers rely on the gas-free certification provided by the cash buyer because they don't have the capability to check such large vessels themselves.

"Clearly some cash buyers are cutting corners.

"This is unacceptable, and that is why we are going to lay down the law."