

Turkey proves it is possible to clean up a dirty business

SINCE a ship recycling industry emerged in Turkey 30 years ago in order to meet demand for raw materials, the country's facilities have gone through a major transformation, writes Liz McCarthy.

"We are not ashamed to say we looked ugly in the past," says Leyal Ship Recycling department head Dimitri Ayvatoglu. "For the first 20 years, the industry was purely commercial and concerned with price. But after that the issue of ship recycling and environmental safety became a hot issue.

"There are now baseline requirements set by the government, but certain yards go beyond that level to create a competitive edge to buy ships."

All cutting is now carried out on concrete so that hazardous waste can be collected and disposed of, and if the aft part of the ship (that is not being cut yet) is



Operations at Leyal Ship Dismantling & Recycling in Aliaga, Turkey: the country's facilities have gone through a major transformation in the last 10 years.

submerged in water any environmental pollution is controlled using oil booms.

Turkish facilities formed their own national ship recycling association which has centralised training, reporting and health checks. The yards also collectively

employ a single, independent company to remove asbestos from all vessels safely. On top of this, transportation of waste is carried out by a company licensed by the Ministry of Environment.

Government investment in downstream waste management

for the safe and environmentally sound disposal of hazardous materials removed from vessels during the dismantling process has been a huge driver in improving Turkish ship recycling standards.

"Multi-million euro facilities can-

not be funded by ship recyclers alone," says Mr Ayvatoglu. "There is a totally different scale of investment for an incinerator, where the government must step in and help invest."

The overhaul of the Turkish ship recycling sector has prompted a delegation from Pakistan to visit

Leyal, and other ship recycling facilities in Turkey, this month to learn what lessons they can take back to improve their own industry.

The downside for Turkish yards is higher wages and other overhead costs compared to many ship recycling facilities in the Indian subcontinent. On top of that, many have yet to repay investments used to improve working conditions.

For these reasons, Turkish yards cannot offer such competitive prices to owners as countries on the Indian subcontinent, which has left them under-utilised. In 2009, 127 ships were sold for recycling in Turkey, equivalent to 300,000 tdt, but Mr Ayvatoglu says this is just half of the country's breaking capacity.

While national steel markets play a large part in scrap prices, if other shipbreaking nations invest to improve yard standards it could create a slightly more even playing field. ■