

From D Ayvatoglu

SIR, We refer to your Insight & Opinion column of May 30, titled "Demolition derby" as well as the associated increasing coverage of ships demolition as reported in your pages, and we would like to hereby briefly present what we believe is an economically viable, environmentally responsible and politically correct alternative option for the demolition of ships.

Europe is particularly fortunate in this matter in having literally next door the single largest importer of steel scrap in the world, Turkey, with 2004 scrap imports amounting to 12m tonnes compared with second placed China with 10m tonnes, and similar 2005 statistics.

Cost-wise, Turkey's advantage is also unrivalled, certainly when compared with cost factors in the rest of EU, a point of valuable significance in a traditionally labour-intensive industry really sustainable only with strong bottom-line returns.

Economic fundamentals and geographic proximity are not the only arguments in favour of the Turkish ship demolition industry.

Turkey is a member of OECD, full signatory of the Basel Convention and active participant in IMO, ILO and other pertinent international fora. Indeed on the question of the numerous ex-European navy vessels, Turkey's status as a core Nato member and EU member candidate country can also hardly go un-noticed.

The choice of Turkey for the demolition of EU government and privately controlled ships is therefore economically viable and politically correct. It is also environmentally sound and can certainly be financially solid.

The Turkish demolition industry has unarguably made significant progress, particularly during the past few years, towards meeting all relevant national and international standards for safe and environmentally responsible demolition of ships.

The Shipbreakers' Association of Turkey members, operating about 30 designated plots with an annual capacity of up to 1m tonnes light weight, are active in dedicated facilities near the port of Aliaga on the non-tidal Aegean coast of Turkey in strict conformity to all national laws and regulations concerning labour conditions and the safe dismantling of ships, which bear no resemblance to those applying in the subcontinent.

Our association's members have, after considerable effort and significant expense, organised the effective and efficient removal and disposal of asbestos and other toxic materials from the ships being dismantled by trained and experienced personnel, using European state-of-the-art equipment, supervised by properly certified management and supported by purpose-built facilities and storage areas.

Last but not least, our members are in a position to pay equitable prices for the vessels they acquire in the free market instead for being absolutely dependent on substantial government subsidies and public funds.

Currently Turkey suffers a price disadvantage of \$150 per light weight tonne on a delivered basis compared with prices offered by the subcontinent. But this surely reflects a really unassailable advantage in labour, safety and indeed environmental conditions between the two regimes.

Prices offered for demolition in Turkey represent a real and effective motive for the international shipowners (government or private) to commit their obsolete ships for demolition in a socially and environmentally responsible manner and Turkey should therefore be the first and foremost choice for such ships.

Surely it is worth overcoming this price disadvantage to effect safe and environmentally responsible demolition of ships. Indeed, eminent members of our association have long been further developing

and upgrading their facilities and operations in an effort to meet increasingly strict rules and exact requirements for a safe and environmentally sustainable demolition of ships. They are indeed willing to expend even greater effort and funds towards achieving this goal.

We hope in turn that the international community will try to find ways to practically assist and recompense our members for these efforts.

D Ayvatoglu

For and on behalf of the

Shipbreakers' Association of Turkey