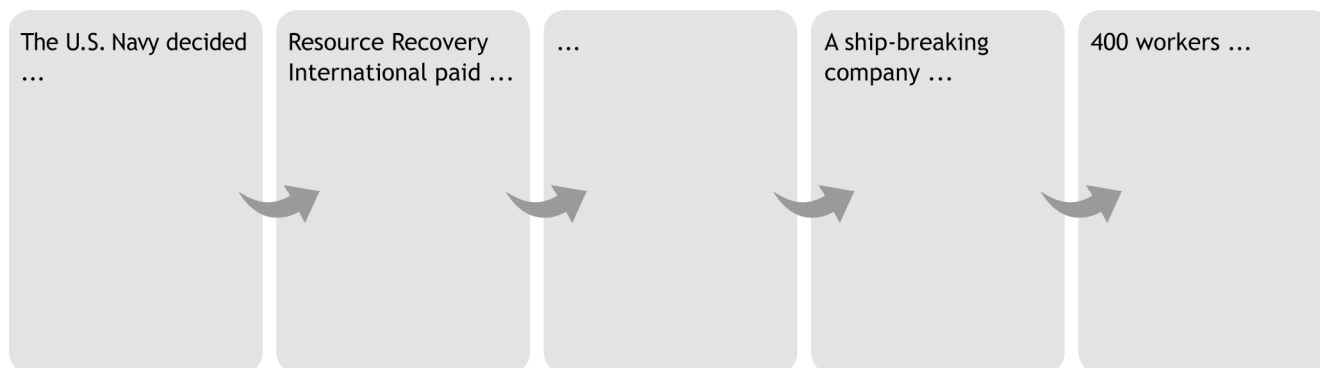


● **W1 What Happened to the USS Bennington? (T2, Assignment B)**



● **T3 The Funeral in Alang, India**

By Will Englund and Gary Cohn

*The morning after he complains of a cough and chest pain, a 35-year-old ship breaker is dead.*

It is late morning and the laborers at Plot 37 have gathered outside the gate. Each man holds a plank on his shoulder. They begin walking, falling into a procession down the street, past the yards. They carry the boards like peasants

5 with pitchforks, or soldiers with rifles. Others turn to watch, though they've seen this before. A hundred men, swelling to 200, move determinedly down the street, quiet at first. Then the chanting begins. "Ram, nam, satya hai." The Name of the Lord is the Truth.

10 At the front, wrapped in an orange shroud, they carry the body of Shahade Ram, 35, who had worked here five years. He had complained of a cough and chest pain. A self-styled doctor told him he would be fine and gave him a glucose injection. At 1 a.m. he had died in his hut. That was nine

15 hours ago. The men come to the place where Alang creek cuts through the dunes and enters the Bay of Cambray. Below the tide line, a small corral of timbers is driven into the sand. Inside it, the wood the men have been carrying is piled four feet

20 high. Traditionally, a body is burned with sandalwood, but here the men must use scrap lumber scavenged from the ships. There is no priest for a proper Hindu funeral, so a man who knows the ritual leads the ceremony, along with Ram's brother.

25 The body is placed on the pile. More boards are put on top, and large timbers are leaned against the pyre. The smell of incense overpowers the smell of excrement (here, below the high-tide mark, is where the men come to defecate) and the acrid smell of smoke from the nearby

30 plots. There is a brief distraction: A fire at a plot 200 yards away has sent workers running in all directions. It ends with the concussive explosion of an oxygen canister. Seven men walk around the pyre, chanting, "Ram, nam, satya-hai," and lighting the fire with burning bundles of reeds. Bright orange flames leap from the pyre, and the men back away from the heat. A few leave. One rings a bicycle bell as he walks away.

The fire burns for a long time, until finally the tide comes in, washing away what little remains of Shahade Ram. 1997, *The Baltimore Sun*

**ANNOTATIONS**

- concussive** – shaking the body because the noise is so loud
- corral** – a circular fence or enclosure
- to defecate** – to get rid of solid waste from the body through the bowels
- lumber** – cut wood
- pitchfork** – a long farm tool with two spikes used for lifting straw
- plank** – a long flat piece of wood
- Plot 37** – an area on the beach in which a ship-breaking company works
- pyre** – a fire to burn a dead body
- to scavenge** – to collect by searching through rubbish
- shroud** – a cloth to wrap a dead body
- to swell** – to get bigger/to grow
- tide line** – the line which marks the highest point of the sea level on a beach

**Assignments**

- A** Describe Ram's funeral using your own words.
- B** Analyse how the authors Englund and Cohn convey a critical view of the situation on the beach in Alang. Consider the following:
  - Choice of event to describe
  - Description of the scene
  - Description of the conditions
- C** CREATIVE WRITING. Imagine you are a ship-breaking worker called Sanjay, a former colleague of Shahade Ram. Write your diary entry for the last 24 hours in which you describe what has happened and in which you think about your hopes for the future.