

Statement

# French public health researcher refusal to take award in protest against 'Industrial Crimes' welcomed

Sunday 12 August 2012, by [BANI](#), [ToxicsWatch Alliance](#) (Date first published: 11 August 2012).

## Nuclear and construction industry among the most risky

Anti-asbestos campaigner denounces 'collateral damage of progress' world over

New Delhi, Aug 11: ToxicsWatch Alliance (TWA) and Ban Asbestos Network of India (BANI) welcome the refusal of Annie Thébaud-Mony director of research at Frenchs National Institute for Health and Medical Research to accept the "Legion d'Honneur" (Legion of Honour), one of the highest honors bestowed by the French government. She wants the government to "challenge the impunity that until now has protected those who carry out industrial crimes." [1] The French government had announced that Annie was to become a knight in the Légion d'Honneur [2].

Annie refers to industrial sectors like nuclear and construction as among the most risky. She is the author of 'Nuclear Servitude: Subcontracting and Health in the French Civil Nuclear Industry' published last year. In the book she asks, "What kind of public health policy, what kind of institutional vigilance, will allow us to effectively protect the health of the 'temporary and subcontracted' operators who will be performing - for French society as a whole - the tasks required for managing this [nuclear] waste?"

These very questions are relevant for the Prime Minister of India too who is zealously promoting nuclear power to solve the energy problem.

Annie is the co-founder of Ban Asbestos France which led the successful campaign seeking ban on asbestos, making France the first country in the world to ban asbestos. Since then more than 55 countries have banned it. India's reluctance to immediately ban has been a cause of concern for her.

She was in India during the successful campaign against the Le Clemenceau, the asbestos laden hazardous end- of-life French ship. TWA had given a testimony to the Supreme Court's Monitoring Committee (SCMC) on Hazardous Wastes along with her highlighting the plight of worker's health in the shipbreaking industry at Alang beach in 'vibrant' Gujarat. She had disputed the French Ambassador's misrepresentation of facts regarding French law on trade in hazardous wastes in her testimony to SCMC. She was in India to meet victims of asbestos related diseases last year too.

In her letter of refusal to the French Minister of Equality of the Territories and Housing, she wrote, "After thirty years of research I cannot help but note that working conditions continue to deteriorate, that awareness of the health disaster that is asbestos has not led to a strategy to counter the epidemic of work-related and environmental cancers, that hazardous jobs are subcontracted and undertaken by the poorest and most precarious workers, salaried or independent,

labouring in industry, agriculture, services or the public sector.”

She categorically stated, “...the recognition that I wish for woul

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## **Footnotes**

[1] See on ESSF (article 26086), [“Why I had to refuse to be decorated with the Legion of Honour” - The fight for health at work in France.](#)

[2] <http://www.legiondhonneur.fr/shared/fr/promo/fpromo.html>