



ข่าวสิ่งแวดล้อม ประจำวันที่ **วันที่ 5 มกราคม 2561**

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Gold miner claims tests let it off hook

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Initial lab results show no trace of chemical substances used to mine gold in polluted water soaking paddy fields near Akara Resources PLC's gold mining site in Phichit, the company said yesterday.

But the Department of Pollution Control has not received any of the test results yet, according to the department's spokeswoman Sunee Piyapanpong.

Once received, the results must first be submitted to other agencies such as the Department of Primary Industries and Mines for consideration, she said.

Akara Resources made its remarks to counter media reports that water found in the fields and canals close to the controversial site were heavily polluted.

The company, which is on a panel working with state officials on the pollution problem, said some parties were trying to distort information on the examination of mining tails storage pond leakage. Locals seem convinced the water has been contaminated by leaked chemicals from the mine's storage ponds, turning the natural water supply toxic.

According to the company, it received a complaint on Nov 14 and two days later state officials collected water samples for the tests from six areas adjacent to the gold mining site. More samples were taken from another nine areas on Dec 6, it said. Representatives of the company joined the probe.

"The initial result from the state agencies' labs, including the Department of Pollution Control, found no chemical in

the samples related with the company's gold mining, especially cyanide," Akara Resources said.

"The possible cause might be related to rotten rice in the fields after rains or illegal waste dumping near the mining site," it said. The lab results found little or no difference in the level of heavy metals present compared to before mining operations began, the company said.

For example, the amount of iron and manganese stood at 23.9 milligrammes per litre and 6.27 mg/l, respectively, in natural water sources before the company began operating there, it said.

The same two heavy metals were present in the controlled paddy fields located a few kilometres from the site after work had begun but the levels were comparable at 30.6 mg/l and 5.85 mg/l, it added.

The test also detected less arsenic in the controlled paddy fields at present compared to the natural water resources earlier, it said.

Levels of arsenic, a component used in weed-killing chemicals and pesticides, stood at 0.01 mg/l in the paddies, it said.

Praphapit Jumpee, the company's communications manager, insisted the polluted water was not caused by the company.

The government has ordered the Chatree site suspended since January 2017, causing more than 1,000 staff to lose their jobs. The order was issued in the wake of environmental complaints by residents.

The company is now seeking several billion baht of compensation via international arbitration in Singapore.