

# World Bank Seeking Answers Over Dragon's Tail

BY DOUGLAS GILLISON  
THE CAMBODIA DAILY

The World Bank said Thursday that it was asking the government for clarification concerning plans to allow an Australian company to mine Ratanakkiri province's Virachey National Park.

Officials and a company representative revealed last month that the Ministry of Industry, Mines and Energy had signed agreements with Indochine Resources—then known as Battle Mountain Minerals—to search for minerals within the park.

Since 2000, the World Bank has provided nearly \$5 million in credit and grants toward a government program designed to protect the 332,500-hectare park—which is listed as an Asean Heritage Park—and improve its management.

"We have raised this issue with the government and initiated a discussion within the Ministry of Environment in an effort to clarify the government's intention," Peter Jipp, World Bank senior natural resource management specialist, said in an e-mail message.

"It is our understanding that the licenses issued to Indochine Resources LTD authorize exploration for, but not exploitation of, mineral resources," Jipp wrote,

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—PETER JIPP,  
NATURAL RESOURCES  
SPECIALIST

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adding that the Bank believed the Environment Ministry had not been told of the dealings with Indochine Resources.

The World Bank's loans to Cambodia for the park's management require Cambodia to minimize "unsustainable development" in the park and inform the World Bank of land transactions that could harm the park's integrity.

Environment Ministry Secretary of State Yin Kim Sean said Thursday that his ministry was working to see that Indochine Resources respected the law.

"The Ministry of Environment is working with the World Bank to ensure that firm respects the conditions of the law," he said, adding that he was too busy to answer further questions.

Indochine Resources directors

David Evans and Jeremy Snaith resigned Wednesday as directors of the Sydney-based mining firm Jupiter Mines—a minority shareholder in Indochine Resources—ahead of a shareholder vote on whether to remove them.

Calls for the ouster of the pair, dubbed "bananas in pajamas" by Australian newspapers, followed their June convictions by a court in the United Arab Emirates capital of Abu Dhabi after the pair reportedly got drunk and undressed themselves on an international flight from Sydney in April, charges the men have denied.

Jipp said Thursday that the Bank was encouraging the passage of legislation to prohibit mining in core areas of the park.

Moreover, he wrote: "[W]e continue to encourage the government of Cambodia to make good choices when they pick business partners and...to ensure their partners are committed to socially and environmentally responsible development."

Sydney solicitor Ross Hill, who represents Snaith and Evans, said in an e-mail that he was unable to contact his clients Thursday. However, Hill said last month that his clients were committed to protecting Cambodia's environment.