

## Opinion poll British voters now don't trust Blair

AFP, London

Two thirds of British voters do not trust Prime Minister Tony Blair, according to a poll published yesterday.

Almost two thirds believe Blair is "losing his grip," according to the Mori poll for the Financial Times.

A total of 28 per cent said they had never trusted him, while 38 per cent said they have not trusted him since the start of the year.

Elsewhere, 30 per cent said they "strongly agree" that Blair is losing his grip while 33 per cent tend to agree.

Only 31 per cent said they were satisfied with Blair's performance as prime minister, against 61 per cent who were not.

Mori interviewed 1,002 adults by telephone between June 20 and 22.

Blair has come under fierce criticism in recent weeks over his handling of the Iraq war.

A poll last month showed that the majority of British voters believe Britain and the United States deliberately exaggerated evidence that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in order to win support for going to war.

A parliamentary foreign affairs committee is currently investigating claims that Britain embelished intelligence on Iraq's WMD.

A Washington report adds: Deadly attacks on coalition troops and the slow progress of reconstruction efforts in Iraq are eroding support for the US-led occupation.

Only 56 per cent of respondents in the USA Today/CNN/Gallup poll released Monday said Iraq was worth going to war, down from 73 per cent in April.

The percentages of people expressing confidence US forces would find evidence of Iraq's banned weapons or ousted Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein also slipped by large margins.

Some 55 per cent said they were confident US-led forces would find weapons of mass destruction, down sharply from 84 per cent in late March, when the war was still raging.

Fewer than half those polled, 48 per cent, said they were confident Saddam will be captured or killed, down from 70 per cent in March.

The poll of 1,003 adults taken Friday through Sunday has a margin of error of three percentage points.

## 14 get life for murders in Gopalganj, Brahmanbaria

UNB, Gopalganj

A court here on Sunday sentenced nine men to life imprisonment and another man to two years' rigorous imprisonment (RI) in a murder case.

The nine convicts -- Samad Sheikh, Azizul Sheikh, Sarwar Sheikh, Nantu Sheikh, Abad Sheikh, Dhalu Sheikh, Masud Sheikh, Sakat Sheikh and Kalam Sheikh (absconding) of Mokstapur upazila -- were also fined Tk 10,000 each in default to serve two more years of RI.

The other convict Monem Sheikh was sentenced to two years in prison.

The prosecution case, in brief, was that on March 5, 1997, the accused attacked one Ambia Begum of Nonakheri village in the upazila and tortured her to death.

A case was filed with the police against 34 people and police charge-sheeted them after preliminary investigation.

After examining the records and witnesses, Additional Sessions Judge M Obaidul Sobhan handed down the verdict sentencing the 10 people and acquitted 24 others, as the allegations against them could not be proven.

Another report from Brahmanbaria adds: Five people were sentenced to life imprisonment Sunday by a court here in a murder case.

The convicts are Jaz Miah, Hira Miah, Altaf Ali, Mofiz Miah and Meher Ali of Sharail upazila.

According to the prosecution, the accused murdered one Uchhan Miah of the upazila with lethal weapons following a land dispute.

A case was filed against 11 people.

After examining the records and witnesses, Additional District and Sessions Judge AKM Nasiruddin Mahmud handed down the verdict and acquitted six others.

## BNP leader

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His body was sent to the DMCH morgue for autopsy.

Amin was also rushed to the DMCH and is now undergoing treatment.

"I saw a gang all wearing cap chasing Muktar. They shot and killed him in front of me," Anwar said.

Police said Muktar alias Bomba Muktar was a listed criminal and accused in many cases. He was recently arrested following a clash in the area.

Family members said Muktar returned home from Malaysia five and a half years ago. He was arrested two years ago and was released seven months back from the Dhaka Central Jail.

The victim's nephew, Monty said he accompanied his uncle to the mosque. While he and his uncle were returning a gang chased them down to their home.

Local people said the victim helped police arrest some local miscreants that might have led to his killing.

The duty officer of the Sutrapur Police Station said no case was filed till 9:00 last night.

## ETV equipment

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reconstituted ETV Limited.

The petitioner submitted that the government failed to keep its commitment made earlier to return the equipment in four weeks that has elapsed.

As proceedings of the court continued, Barrister Abul Hasib intervened. He claimed Nasir A Chowdhury was chairman of the reconstituted ETV and suggested the equipment be returned to his client who is the real owner of ETV.

The bench comprising Justice A B M Khairul Huq and Justice Syed Shahidur Rahman turned down his plea and suggested taking the dispute over ownership to the designated court that deals with company matters.

## Doctor

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of Samorita Hospital from where the driver fled away, leaving the car and the victim behind.

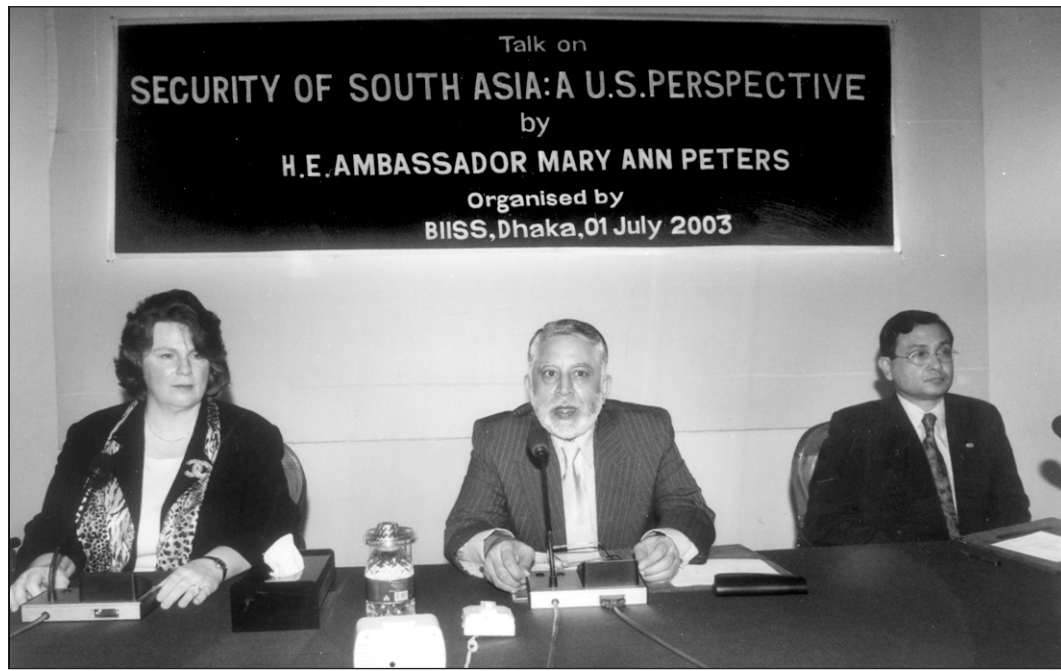
Hundreds of people who had witnessed the accident and later saw the car dragging the body, tried to stop the car as they followed it. The incident drew the attention of police when people reached the spot where Ali was left dead or unconscious.

Ali was rushed to Samorita Hospital and later shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the attending doctors declared him dead.

The doctor and his wife, Shahina Yasmeen, left their Pisciculture Housing Estate residence for Dhanmondi. Ali dropped his wife at Dhanmondi Government Boys School gate. She was supposed to pick their son Saïq Ibne Shahjahan, a student of class three.

Ali was driving towards the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) where he was a student of a three-year MS course. He was scheduled to seat for the second year final examinations on July 20.

Police have seized the car and kept it at the Dhanmondi Police Station. Police said they have requested the road transport authorities to provide information about the owner of the vehicle. An unnatural death case was filed with the Mohammadpur Police Station.



Former ambassador MR Osmany speaks at a discussion on "Security of South Asia: A US Perspective", organised by the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS), while US Ambassador Mary Ann Peters, far left, and BISS Director General Abdul Mubeen, far right, look on. (Story on Front Page)

## Another ammo haul

FROM PAGE 1  
ered from another ditch at Jograpara.

Later in the afternoon, 9,000 bullets in 13 olive-green packets and 24kg explosives in four packets were recovered from the septic tank of the house of local BNP worker Abdul Jabbar. Twelve empty plastic bags were also recovered from the house. Police picked up Abdul Jabbar's wife Rawshan Ara for interrogation.

Some 1,500 bullets and 18kg explosives were recovered from a pond in front of BNP worker Joyal Abedin's house.

Raiding the house of another BNP worker, Rais Mia, police and the BDR recovered 6,500 bullets in 13 packets and six kilograms of explosives in one packet.

With the raid, 89,100 bullets and 168kg explosives have been recovered from the area so far.

"Perhaps, the ammunitions and explosives were unloaded from the truck and the miscreants tried to hide these," said Zakir Hossain, additional superintendent of police, Bogra. He added that the search would continue since there might be more ammunition and explosives hidden in the area.

Meanwhile, security was tightened along the borders of the northern region to prevent the miscreants from crossing the border, said a senior police officer.

"The entire Birkerdar union was

found to be a den of smugglers and AL leader Pintu was hired by them for transportation of the ammunition and explosives," said the official.

Earlier on Friday, police recovered 62,100 bullets and 120kg explosives from an abandoned truck and the house of AL leader Pintu.

A police source said some 6,500 bullets of the total 62,100 were missing.

When contacted, a senior police official confirmed the report and said on condition of anonymity that it might have happened due to inaccurate counting of the bullets as there were 250 to 350 bullets in each packet.

Meanwhile, prime suspect Jalal was arrested from the Airport Railway Station in Dhaka on Monday.

Sources said Pintu and Jalal were found unloading the explosives from the truck before police reached the place on Friday night.

After the police raid, Pintu and Jalal took shelter at the house of Jamaat-e-Islami activist Delwar Hossain, who is also a cousin of Pintu. They fled to Dhaka the next morning by train.

The local BNP held two meetings yesterday at Shaheed Khokon Park in the town and at Battala in Kahalu to protest what they said the anti-state activities of the AL.



Hindu priests lead Ratha Jatra, a chariot festival, organised by the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), in Dhaka yesterday.

## Deputy secretaries

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59 posts in the administration, said the sources.

Although the 1981 batch is considered one of the best since independence and became eligible for promotion over two years back, the government has no plan to promote any official from it, the sources added.

A group of policymakers of the ruling BNP and some top officials of the administration assume that the 1981 batch officials are pro-Awami League (AL), as many of them were appointed as deputy commissioners during the AL rule.

Official sources said the government is thinking of promoting officials of the 1982 batch ahead of the 1981 batch. The 1982 batch officials will earn eligibility for joint secretary in January 2004.

Even if the government plans to give promotion to officials of the 1981 batch along with their juniors of 1982, the majority of the 1981 batch

officials will be left out, many officials fear.

Meanwhile, the government decided to upgrade 104 joint secretaries of the 1977 and 1979 batches to additional secretaries soon, who will supersede 153 officials of 1973, said highly placed sources. Presently, there are 41 vacancies for additional secretary.

They said the government will push ahead with its decision on promoting the officials of the two batches to additional secretaries even by relaxing the promotion policy.

The sources added that 173 officials of the 1977 and 1979 batches were promoted to joint secretaries against only 46 vacancies before.

## Villagers besiege UNO office demanding trial of murder cases

UNB, Thakurgaon

Hundreds of men and women of 10 villages in Ranishankail upazila besieged the Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO)'s office Wednesday demanding trial of 11 murder cases pending for the last few years.

The villagers, with the initiative of local NGOs -- CDA, RDRS and ISS -- brought out a protest procession, held a rally in front of the UNO office and submitted a memorandum to the UNO.

Police failed to make any headway in the murder cases including the recent rape and murder of two young girls, fueling the anger of the villagers.

Later, the UNO assured the angry villagers of taking necessary steps for speedy trial of the cases.

Locals said Khushi, 20, and her cousin Sabina, 18, of Bongaon village were raped and killed on May 29, Sahera Khatun, 20, of village Baksa Sundarpur was killed on June 24 for dowry, and businesswoman Mominur Rahman Dalim, 27, of Munishgaon village was murdered in March this year in Panchagarh.

Nilufar Yasmin, a student of class 10 of Ranishankail Girls' High School, was led to commit suicide on January 27 this year. Housewife Budi Begum, 40, was strangled at Doshia village and teenage girl Mukta was murdered after rape last December. Four other murder cases were filed in last two years.

## Kibria visits

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by updating each other on family members and personal issues.

Kibria however jokingly remarked that the health of Saïfur might have been deteriorated suddenly due to the budget stress. He also hoped that a few days' rest would get Saïfur back in shape.

"I did not go there for any political reason," Kibria told The Daily Star last night. "I know him since 1950. This was just a social visit."

He said they did not discuss budget or politics, but talked about old days, family members and personal matters.

Saïfur, who was admitted to the CMH last week for treatment, is expected to be released today.

## Hasina

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to students to strengthen movement," she added.

Refuting Khaleda's speech blaming the AL for the ammunition haul in Bogra, the AL chief demanded that the persons behind the arms deal be tracked down.

She blamed the prime minister for nominating a person with a dark past for the OIC (Organisation of Islamic Conference) secretary general. "Illegal arms were seized from his car at least twice," Hasina said, alluding to Prime Minister's Parliamentary Affairs Adviser Salauddin Quader Chowdhury.

The leader of the opposition came down heavily on the government for harassing newsmen of two private TV channels, who were assigned to reporting on the ammunition haul in Bogra.

"It seems as if the government would remain in power for ever. They (the ruling BNP lawmakers) are using inventive with careless abandon against the opposition," she said.

Hasina once again said that the government borrowed loans from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank under strict conditions.

"The government will have to disclose the covert conditions for the loans and every parliament member has the right to know."

Talking about the prime minister's allegation that the leader of the opposition tarnished the country's image abroad, Hasina referred to a European Parliament resolution, Amnesty International reports, the State Department of the US and western media, which she said unveiled human-rights violations by the government.

## Military base

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ism, she said. "South Asia occupies our counter-terrorism map."

Former ambassador MR Osmany, chairman of the board of directors of BISS, in his concluding remarks sought to draw a parallel between the US policy toward Canada and Mexico and that of India's toward her small neighbours.

Ambassador Peters, however, surmised the region's misfortune from a purely geopolitical angle. "Progress in South Asia is hostage to the Kashmir conflict," she asserted.

The US-Bangladesh relationship dotted a substantial part of the envoy's speech as she eulogised Bangladesh's efforts in eradicating polio, controlling population boom, improving women's rights and maintaining an excellent international profile by dedicating to peacekeeping missions and adopting a moderate stance as a democratically-run Muslim nation.

The talk became further animated when a crosscurrent of opinions dominated the question-answer phase.

Former army chief General Nuruddin Khan mentioned that Dhaka does not seem to get the same attention from Washington as Delhi or Islamabad does, although Dhaka has always been a 'good boy' in dealing with some of the thorniest issues of international relations (like the signing of the Non-proliferation and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaties).

Both India and Pakistan refused to sign those treaties.

Ambassador Peters responded: "we don't deal with Dhaka like we deal with a wheel that squeaks."

To highlight further the importance Washington attaches to Dhaka, she cited Secretary of State Colin Powell's recent Dhaka visit as an example.

The US envoy refused to be drawn into making an opinion about the China-India rapprochement.

Nuclearisation and terrorism are the two major US concerns in South Asia, she said. "We want India and Pakistan not to transfer nuclear technology to other countries. We also seek more cooperation in uprooting terrorism," she added.

Major General Md Abdul Mubeen, director general of BISS, delivered the welcome speech at the beginning of the talk.

## 3 killed, 33 hurt in Cox's Bazar road mishap

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Three persons were killed and 33 others injured when a bus skidded off the Chittagong-Cox's Bazar Highway and fell into a ditch at Kutubdia yesterday.

Chokoria police said the Cox's Bazar-bound bus met with the accident at around 2 pm as the driver lost control over the vehicle.

The dead were identified as Nurul Amin, 40, Md Hasan, 25 and Pappi, 23.

The injured passengers were admitted to Chokoria Health Complex and private clinics in Cox's Bazar.

## AL's JS boycott

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(Amendment) Bill, 2003, Bangladesh Sericulture Board (Amendment) Bill, 2003, Bangladesh Sericulture Research and Training Institute Bill, 2003 and Bangladesh Flag Vessels (Amendment) Bill, 2003.

The AL kept off the House from the beginning of its session on June 10.

When Sheikh Hasina returned home on June 14 after a month-long tour of Europe and America, the AL Parliamentary Party met next day and decided to join the House sittings from June 16 to protest the budget.

The AL staged its first walkout on that day, protesting the killing of its student front's city unit leader Saiful Rasul Palash.

On June 18, it walked out of the House twice, first protesting a statement by the education minister criticising the AL for calling hartal coinciding with the visits of Indonesian President Megawati Soekarnoputri and US Secretary of State Collin Powell and then over circulation of a letter by Chief Whip Khandakar Delwar Hossain giving instructions on use of mobile

phone.

Two more walkouts followed on June 19 and June 24. It staged the sixth walkout on June 25 when the Chair declined to allow its lawmakers to protest State Minister for Housing Alamgir Kabir's 'derogatory remarks' against Sheikh Hasina.

An ALPP meeting on June 26 decided to go for an indefinite boycott of the parliament till the state minister apologised and the Speaker expunged his remarks.

The AL also gave a memorandum to the deputy speaker in this respect and the latter formally invited both the treasury bench and the opposition to talks resolve to the matter.

But the talks became uncertain following fresh 'invectives' against Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Hasina by the Prime Minister's Parliamentary Affairs Adviser Salauddin Quader Chowdhury.

Treasury bench members including Fazlur Rahman Patal and Hafizuddin Ahmed also did the same without any intervention from the chair, Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid said.

## 4 US soldiers killed

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a key Shiite Muslim leader pouring cold water on coalition plans to draw up an Iraqi constitution, while a US-appointed governor was arrested on kidnap charges.

In Fallujah, witnesses said three explosions including one at the al-Hassan mosque of the town's al-Askari neighborhood left a total of six Iraqis believed to be theology students dead and 15 injured.

They reported that a ball of fire ripped through the mosque, destroying two rooms and gouging a hole in its dome.

Several eyewitnesses said the mosque had been the target of a US airstrike, as an aircraft was heard overflying the town before the shrine was hit by what they said was a missile.

Among the wounded was Sheikh Laith, the imam of the mosque, whose leg was amputated, the witnesses said.

Fallujah, 50 kilometres west of Baghdad, has been tense since US troops shot dead at least 16 people during protests there in late April, with attacks on US troops increasing in recent days.

In a separate incident on the southern highway near Yusufiyeh, about 20 kilometres (13 miles) south of Baghdad, two US soldiers were injured when their vehicle plunged into a deep hole in the road, witnesses told an AFP photographer who went to the scene.

While some witnesses said attackers then fired a rocket-propelled grenade at a second vehicle that had come to assist, others said Iraqis had approached the vehicle and poured gasoline over it before setting it on fire.

In Washington, officials said the attacks on US and allied forces were expected to continue despite aggressive action to stop them, while insisting efforts to pacify and stabilise Iraq were on track and not getting bogged down.

At least 21 US and six British soldiers have now been killed as a result of hostile action since the war was declared effectively over two months ago, on May 1.

"We're in a global war on terrorism and there are people that don't

## Two TV channels

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around 11:00 pm and interrogated Director, News Shaikh Siraj, Chief News Editor Shah Alamgir and Chief of Correspondents Saiful Amin.

Police officials stayed there for nearly an hour and quizzed them about the bulletin that also reported the arrest of a few Jamaat-e-Islami workers in connection with the haul.

However, it could not be exactly known what the police tried to find out, as the TV channels remained tight-lipped.

Earlier on Sunday, Secretary General of Jamaat and Social Welfare Minister Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid and Assistant Inspector General (AIG) of Police Khandaker Golam Faruq filed two general diaries (GDs) with Ramna and Tejgaon police stations against Channel-1 and ATN.

The Jamaat secretary general in his GD accused Channel-1 of falsely implicating Jamaat leaders in the Bogra ammunition and explosive haul incident.

Golam Faruq, meanwhile, filed the GD following the ATN's report that the ammunition and explosives were being smuggled out to India from Chittagong.

Besides, Bogra Jamaat leaders had earlier threatened two local correspondents of the TV channels for, as they put it, 'untrue reporting'.

Meanwhile, Awami League Joint Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday expressed grave concern over the filing of the GDs.

In a statement, the AL leader said the BNP-Jamaat alliance government had made the coun-

## Missing pistol

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was brought to the IMA by Aurora on December 9, 1982 and presented to IMA Commandant Lt Gen M Thomas during IMA's golden jubilee celebrations.

After the surrender in Dhaka, the revolver was taken to the headquarters of Indian Army's eastern command in Kolkata before it was brought to the IMA.

Gen Shergill also showed a photograph of the handing over of the revolver by Aurora to Thomas.

"The weapon symbolises our glorious victory and is a source of inspiration for our cadets and officers," Shergill said.

Meanwhile, police in Delhi are still on the lookout for the pistol that went missing from the National Museum here. Police have questioned more than 50 people in connection with the incident.

Five separate police teams have been formed, each headed by assistant commissioners and police are pursuing various theories behind the theft. Police are also not ruling out that the pistol could be hidden somewhere in the premises of the museum which was being searched thoroughly.

## Blue kerosene

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long cheated customers by mixing kerosene with costlier fuels like octane, petrol and diesel in order to push up the profit margin. The introduction of blue kerosene is expected to check this unlawful practice.

A litre of kerosene costs Tk 17 while diesel, petrol and octane are sold at Tk 20, Tk 33 and Tk 35.

Sources said the newly introduced kerosene would make adulteration difficult, as octane, diesel and petrol will be readily identifiable as impure because they will turn bluish when mixed with kerosene. The normal colour of octane is light red, petrol light orange and diesel straw.

However, blue kerosene was not available in any retail outlet in the city yesterday and retailers said they might have to wait until the present stock of white kerosene in different depots is exhausted.

BPC General Manager (marketing) Mizanur Rahman said they started dyeing kerosene at Eastern Refinery Limited on June 28 and it was distributed yesterday to all BPC depots.

This blue kerosene would be available with agents of the BPC's registered marketing companies, distributors and dealers, and it would not be sold at any filling station, he said.

However, retailers might have to wait for a few days until the previous stock at depots is sold out, he added.

Sources said vigilance teams led by local deputy commissioners would be inspecting the filling stations and any proven case of adulteration would lead to closure of the station concerned, they

said.

A BPC press release issued yesterday evening called upon petrol pump owners to cooperate with the customers in examining the colour of fuel. It also urged consumers of octane, petrol and diesel to inform the BPC, BSTI (Bangladesh Standard and Testing Institute) or marketing companies about any case of adulteration.

The country's daily consumption of kerosene is about 1,800 tonnes amounting to an annual consumption of 6.5 lakh tonnes, BPC sources said.

The annual demand of diesel is 20-22 lakh tonnes, petrol 1.75 lakh and octane 1.25 lakh. Total annual demand of different types of fuel is 37 lakh.

UNB adds: Fuels adulterated by mixing kerosene cause damage to engines of motor vehicles, accounting for an annual cost of Tk 500-600 crore in repairs, said a senior official at the Energy and Mineral Resources Division.