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Award for ROP department

MUSCAT The Department of Civil Status at Royal Oman Police received an excellence award for implementing the best Smart Card project. **Page 2**

Israel threatens more action in Gaza Strip

Abbas asks Rice to halt Jewish state's 'military escalation'

GAZA Israel struck Hamas targets in the Gaza Strip on Friday and threatened more strong action to stop rocket attacks while Palestinian factions fought each other in turmoil verging on civil war.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, called US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and asked her to halt an Israeli "military escalation". Abbas was quoted by Wafa news agency as asking Rice "to stop the Israeli military escalation against our people and continue their efforts to push the peace process forward".

In Washington, President Bush and visiting British Prime Minister Tony Blair appealed to all parties in Gaza to work for peace. "We strongly urge the parties to work toward a two-state solution," Bush said.

The Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) called for the United Nations to intervene. "All this violence must stop... the United Nations must intervene."

In a phone call with Abbas, Jordanian King Abdullah II urged Palestinians "to unite their front and exercise self-restraint as well as put differences aside".

Prime Minister Ismail Haniya called on Palestinians to unite against "Israeli aggression" and cease internal fighting. "All members of the security services should abide by the instructions of the political leadership and return to their positions and bases, and also all gun-

men should pull out of the streets," Haniya told reporters.

A Palestinian hospital official said at least one man was killed and others were wounded when Israeli helicopter gunships fired on them after they launched a rocket into Israel.

The military said it attacked a rocket crew in northern Gaza and that 10 missiles had struck Israel. One hit a house in the town of Sderot. Medics said there were only minor injuries.

Israeli warplanes hit a minibus near a post manned by Hamas in Gaza City, killing two fighters and wounding five civilians. The army said it had targeted "a vehicle carrying a Hamas cell and weapons".

An earlier raid on a Hamas post left no casualties but five fighters were killed in an early morning raid in Gaza City.

Three other air strikes wounded three Palestinians, one of them a Hamas man and the others civilians, hospital officials said.

Fatah and Hamas forces battled again in Gaza City. Three rocket-propelled grenades were fired at the pro-Hamas Islamic University campus.

Two fighters -- one from each side -- were killed, hospital officials said. A fisherman was also killed after being caught in crossfire. Hospital officials said two other civilians died from wounds sustained during

Please turn to Page 16



READY TO KILL: An Israeli soldier carries a shell for a mobile artillery unit near Kibbutz Nahal-Oz in southern Israel, close to the Gaza Strip, on Friday.

RO30m worth of villas sold at Wave Muscat

By A Staff Reporter OMAN TRIBUNE

MUSCAT All the villas facing the lake and the garden in the grand Wave Muscat project were sold off in the morning sale session held on Thursday.

Following the phenomenal success of the first and second phases, The Wave Muscat, the leading tourism and beachfront residential development project, launched their latest collection of homes and villas located on the first of the three islands. The sale of RO30 million worth of villas is an added value to the third stage of the project. The villas are located on the first residential island of the project.

The positive response contributes a great deal to prompt sales and investment in such a vital project, said HE Engineer Abdullah Bin Abbas Bin Ahmed,

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NEW WEEKLY COLUMN

Starting from today, every Saturday Tariq Hilal Al Barwani will be writing a column on information and communication technology on Page 6

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Bouteflika's allies sweep Algeria poll

ALGIERS The three parties allied with President Abdelaziz Bouteflika have retained their clear majority in Algeria's parliament, the government said on Friday as it declared the outcome of the previous day's elections.

The National Liberation Front (FLN), the Democratic National Rally (RND) and the Society of Peace Movement (MSP) together clinched 249 of the 389 seats in the National People's Assembly, said Interior Minister Yazid Zerhouni.

The nationalist FLN claimed 136 seats, the liberal RND took 61 seats, and the MSP won 52 seats, said

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Oases in Al Jabel Al Akhdhar can do wonders

By Manuela Gutberlet OMAN TRIBUNE

MUSCAT Oases like the ones in Al Jabel Al Akhdhar are a unique phenomenon. "Omani oases should be protected and promoted like a museum," said Professor Andreas Buerkert of the Department of Organic Agriculture and Agro Ecosystems Research in the Tropics and Subtropics, University of Kassel, Germany.

In an exclusive interview to Oman Tribune on the sidelines of the exhibition 'Oases of Oman', Professor Buerkert said: "The connection of Al Jabel Al Akhdhar with the modern transport system, competition with the world market and lack of well-trained labour would lead to the extinction of old plants in the oases."

Buerkert and a team of researchers from three German universities and the German Archaeological Institute have been studying the transformation process of Omani oases during the past five years.

Wheat, bananas, pomegranate, sweet lime and sour oranges are some of the 22 different fruits and vegetable species, which grow in Al Jabel Al Akhdhar.

"At present, foreigners are very curious about Oman. This curiosity should be used to launch



Andreas Buerkert

Omani products such as pomegranate, walnuts, wheat and rose water in the world market," said Buerkert.

To promote fruits and vegetables produced in Al Jabel Al Akhdhar, Buerkert proposes a market for special products like jam made from pomegranate, apricots, limes, dates and date syrup as well as wheat and spices. According to him, there are 500 hectares of wheat crop in the Omani Hajar mountains, which is again a unique phenomenon in the world.

"Certified eco-agriculture is popular all over the world, why not make it a reality in Al Jabel Al Akhdhar. Products should be launched in the world market only in small quantities," suggested Buerkert while stressing that farming in Al Jabel Al Akhdhar is already eco-friendly. "At present,

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Nine killed in Iraq attacks

Five US soldiers killed in separate blasts

BAGHDAD Ambushes on Iraq's deadly roadways killed several people on Friday, as insurgents continued to launch attacks outside Baghdad, where US-led troops are pressing a three-month-old security plan.

Three policemen were killed and two were wounded when a suicide car bomber ploughed into a checkpoint they were manning south of the capital, police officials said.

Five US soldiers were killed and 10 more were wounded in three separate attacks in and around Baghdad, the US military

said on Friday. Thursday's attacks came as thousands of American soldiers scoured a region south of the Iraqi capital for three soldiers kidnapped by Al Qaeda, but it was not immediately clear if those killed were involved in the search.

Inside Baghdad, two people were killed and five wounded in a suicide car bomb attack near a police station. Also on Friday, three truck drivers were killed on a road connecting the northern cities of Kirkuk and Mosul.

In a subsequent attack gunmen stopped a car near a bridge inside the city and

dragged the passengers - a man, his brother and a seven-year-old child - out of the car and shot them.

One of the men died and the other two died and were seriously wounded, according to the director of Kirkuk General Hospital. He added that a hospital employee was shot and wounded in a separate attack.

Another four people were wounded on Friday in a car bomb explosion near a major bridge west of Kirkuk, and a roadside bomb in the city itself wounded three people, including two women.

Agence France-Presse



BIRTH OF A MONTH: The crescent of Jumada Al Awwal 1428 Hijri marks the beginning of new month on Friday.

Bouteflika's allies sweep elections

Continued from Page 1 Zerhouni as he declared the results live on national television.

Various independents collected 33 seats, while the left Workers' Party, led by Louiza Hannoune, one of

Algeria's most popular politicians, won 26 seats in Thursday's vote, becoming the leading opposition group.

Smaller parties shared the remaining seats, including the secular Rally for Culture

and Democracy (RCD) with 19 seats, and seven seats for the environmental National Movement for Nature and Development. The Movement for Youth and Democracy won five seats.

Agence France-Presse

RO30m villas sold

Continued from Page 1

Chairman of Muscat Municipality and Chairman of The Wave Muscat. The property is a good opportunity for both residents and investors. Sale of these villas in such a short span of time reflects the interest of residents and investors in such a project. Those who could not buy during this sale session will have a chance to buy it in another sale scheduled to take place after summer, he added.

The Wave Muscat is being developed through a strategic partnership of the Sultanate's government, the UAE-based Majid Al Futtaim Group, and the Pension Investment Fund. The project is playing a pivotal part in the development of real estate and community lifestyle in the Sultanate.

Free from locusts

Continued from Page 1

carried out by surveying and exploring desert locusts' sites adjacent to the affected states in the Al Dhahira and the Al Wusta regions and the Dhofar Governorate. The process took four days last month, he added. The survey included the plains, valleys and deserts. In addition to this, the Directorate-General of Agriculture and Livestock in Al Dhahira region also conducted a four-day survey to

detect presence of locusts. The Agriculture and Fisheries Development Department in Sohar also carried out a survey and exploration of locusts on Wednesday last.

The surveys showed no presence of desert locusts and no report was received from branches of the Directorate-General of Agriculture in various regions, offices of governors or any other government agencies on the presence of desert locusts.

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Oases in Jabel Al Akhdhar can do wonders

Continued from Page 1 pesticides and fertilisers are used in very low quantities," he added.

Regarding increase in tourism in Al Jabel Al Akhdhar, Buerkert supports promotion of eco-friendly tourism in small groups of 10-15 people, which should be in harmony with nature and the local community.

"Tourists will love to experience nature with all their senses and mingle with local people by eating traditional food. It is common in Switzerland," he added.

In addition, entrance fees, culturally and ecologically trained local tour guides could increase the income of the local community, and therefore, will gain more acceptance among the local community," said Buerkert.

He stressed that big hotels or spas would destroy the general flair of the Al Jabel Al Akhdhar.

With an increased marketing of products from Al Jabel Al Akhdhar, Buerkert believes that the green mountains will become more attractive for the local farmers. "At present, many foreign labourers are working on the fields, but this could change in the future, when the oases will generate more income through sale of eco-products and introduction of eco-tourism," Buerkert added.

AROUND THE WORLD

Moussa dismisses Olmert's offer as gimmick

SHUNEH Arab League chief Amr Moussa on Friday dismissed an offer from Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert to meet Arab leaders on their peace initiative as nothing more than a "gimmick." "This is a gimmick that we have heard before," Moussa told participants at the World Economic Forum on the shores of the Dead Sea in Jordan. "What we are interested in ... is an answer from the Israeli side about peace," he said, referring to a five-year-old Arab summit in Saudi Arabia in March.

Pearl murder suspect dies

KARACHI A Pakistani suspected to be involved in the beheading of journalist Daniel Pearl died on Friday just weeks after he returned his home after allegedly being held at Guantanamo Bay. Saud Memon, who owned the property where Pearl's body was found, disappeared four years ago and only resurfaced in April when he was delivered by unknown people to his home in Karachi, according to his brother Mahmoud. "We got the information some time back that he was taken to Guantanamo Bay."

Gorilla seizes woman

THE HAGUE A gorilla from Rotterdam zoo dragged a woman through a restaurant after it escaped on Friday and went on the rampage, leaving four injured. The gorilla, named Bokito, was captured after he was shot and immobilised with a tranquiliser dart, the Algemeen Dagblad newspaper reported.

Warrant issued against Mami

BOBIGNY (France) A French judge on Friday issued an international arrest warrant for the Algerian singer Cheb Mami, who jumped bail on charges of "voluntary violence" against an ex-girlfriend, a judicial source said. Mami, indicted last October, failed to answer a court summons on May 14, the source said.

Israel to escalate army action in Gaza

Continued from Page 1 internal clashes earlier this week.

Palestinian fighters released Abu Dhabi Television's bureau chief Abdel Salam Abu Askar in Gaza after briefly abducting him, a colleague of the journalist said.

In Tel Aviv, Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni told foreign ambassadors that the government might decide on further action within days and noted the cabinet would meet as usual on Sunday.

"We will see sustained and vibrant measures to end the rocket attacks and remove the threat to southern Israel," government Spokesman David Baker said.

Israel said it might agree to international peacekeepers being deployed in Gaza as long as they were ready to crack down on Palestinian fighters -- a view one foreign diplomat said amounted to a "No".

Tanks and some other troops took up positions just inside the crowded coastal enclave in a move the military called "defensive".

Agencies

Deeper emission cut sought

OSLO Industrial nations in the Kyoto Protocol want deeper cuts in greenhouse gas emissions beyond 2012 despite uncertainty over whether outsiders will join the UN pact, the head of a UN group said on Friday.

Leon Charles, heading a group of government experts from Kyoto countries, also said that 166-nation talks in Bonn reaffirmed there should be a seamless transition from a first period of Kyoto ending in 2012 and new rules from 2013. "There is a general awareness that we must 'mind the gap'," he said in a telephone interview from Bonn. Carbon markets and industrial

investors wanted to know about new rules beyond 2013 as early as possible, he said. The Kyoto group at the May 7-18 talks agreed on a need for urgency in agreeing deeper cuts in world emissions of greenhouse gases, mainly from burning fossil fuels such as coal and oil. To avoid the worst impacts, emissions "will have to peak within 10 to 15 years and be reduced by upwards of 40 per cent," he said.

Kyoto binds 35 rich nations to cut emissions by 5 per cent below 1990 levels by 2008-12 but the United States, which views Kyoto as a threat to jobs and too narrowly based, and develop-

ing countries led by China and India have no 2012 goals.

Kyoto countries account for only about a third of world greenhouse gas emissions and are legally bound to discuss extending the pact. All countries are separately involved in a non-binding "dialogue" about ways to combat warming. Kyoto backers want to merge the Kyoto talks with the broader dialogue at a meeting of environment ministers in Bali, Indonesia, in December and launch global talks on a broader-based pact to fight warming beyond 2012.

Reuters

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