

THURSDAY

Master plan a must

OMAN needs an e-commerce master plan as the information technology (IT) is expected to pave the way to superior, intellectual, creative and further comfortable human life, highlights Talal Abu-Ghazaleh, chairman of Arab Management Society and a leading economic and information technology policy expert in the Gulf.

"E-commerce will create a new paradigm for businesses and customers. Undoubtedly, all business entities will consider the Internet as a key mechanism for re-structuring their common industry structures. Electronic commerce will have a significant impact on the traditional supply chain as well. Since the cost of e-transaction is naturally lower than that of other forms of transactions, the customer will be able to save money on each and every online purchase."

Business and non-business organisations will be able to save money on costly surveys and advertisements and gradually pass on this cost benefits to their customers. E-commerce, which is likely to play a vital role in Oman's economic development and electronic business, offers wonderful possibilities for new services and market expansions.

During the last 20 years, technological progress in Arab countries has been phenomenal. The worldwide IT infrastructure has established thousands of servers and multitudes of user computers in about 160 countries netted to the Internet. It is continuing to spread out fast with hundreds of systems in the Gulf adopting the internet standards every year.

Companies in the Gulf and Middle East have already started using the Internet to announce new developments like expansion, product launch, change in management, experts' joining, takeovers, mergers and technology developments within the organisation. The customers can easily get into the details by searching the web.

In an era of informatics, information is available to anybody, anytime and anywhere. The finest skill required for imparting education is now accessible through the Internet. World over projects are being



TALAL ABU-GHAZALEH:
E-commerce will help customers save money

executed to bring computer and the Internet into all schools. England, the USA, the Germany, India, Malaysia, etc., have already started implementing informatics in schools.

E-commerce begins with the introduction of virtual supermarkets in a locality displaying the products and services they want to sell. It has removed the national boundaries, opening a new dimension in the modern business scenario and expanding the traditional markets at large-scale.

In the current fiscal year, the Arab economies, in general, are expected to record a moderate growth. Indeed, the future is promising. Today or tomorrow, all nations will have to shift their businesses to e-commerce to face the emerging international competition.

The invisible hand, the Internet, has already taken over world's leading markets. The conventional forces of protectionism in developing countries could soon be wiped out. Main sectors would save costs by boosting their efficiency and speed of operation. In today's world, customers expect the best products, services and solutions for the lowest possible cost.

The Internet has become important people's network for a variety of academic researches since the last quarter of 1980s. In fact, it has evolved from its foundation as an academic research tool to the vast open networks.

In Oman, the Internet and e-commerce are still in their infancy stages. □