LEADERS POWERING THE GULF'S ENERGY FUTURE

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COVER STORY

FOKHRUL ISLAM

Transforming business energy management across the Gulf

CEO, GLOBAL PROCUREMENT GROUP

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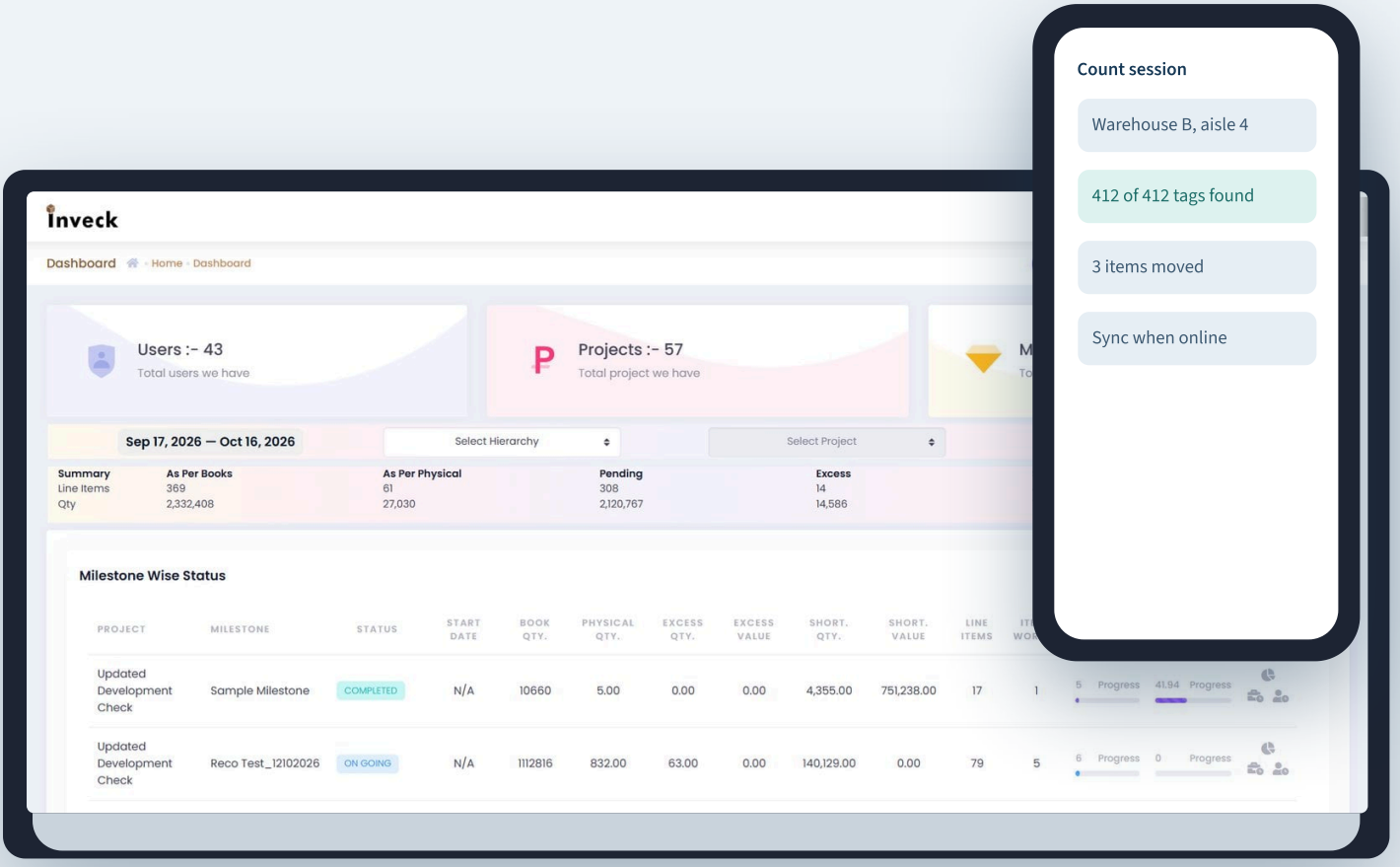

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FROM THE EDITORS

Editor’s note

Leaders Powering the Gulf's Energy Future

We choose our cover stars for one reason: a reader in a similar seat could learn something from them. Fokhrul Islam, CEO at Global Procurement Group, is a clear case.

The chief executive of Global Procurement Group on ClearVUE, its energy management business in the Gulf, and what procurement discipline does for a company's energy bill.

Our cover story follows Fokhrul through the choices that shaped the work, from the early years to the decisions being made now, and asks what other leaders can take from them.

Also in this edition: Data residency in the Gulf: what technology leaders should plan for. The question has moved from where data sits to who can reach it, and under which law. Four decisions to make this year, and the questions to put to every supplier.

Plus: Satya Nadella and the culture reset behind Microsoft's cloud turn. Before the cloud deals and the AI partnership came a quieter change: how Microsoft argued, decided and learned. What a decade of Nadella's leadership shows about fixing culture before strategy.

Read it with a pencil in hand. We hope at least one idea makes it back to your own table. ■

The Editors



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About us

THE
CIO TABLE

Where leaders sit down to talk.

The CIO Table is an international magazine for the people who run large organisations: chief information officers, chief technology officers, chief executives, finance chiefs and security leaders. We publish interviews, essays and analysis about the decisions they make, online and in this magazine.

Most coverage of senior leaders is either promotional or adversarial. We aim for something more useful: a serious conversation about how a decision was made, what it cost, what it changed and what the person would do differently. ■

Interviews

Long conversations about decisions, costs and trade-offs.

Analysis

What changes for the people who run technology and finance.

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Fokhrul Islam

Transforming business energy management across the Gulf

CEO, GLOBAL PROCUREMENT GROUP

The chief executive of Global Procurement Group on ClearVUE, its energy management business in the Gulf, and what procurement discipline does for a company's energy bill.

Leading the Charge in Strategic Procurement and Energy Management

In the rapidly evolving global energy sector, few professionals have made as significant an impact as Fokhrul Islam, the distinguished CEO of Global Procurement Group. Through subsidiary ClearVUE (clearvue.ae in the Gulf), his ambitions are to revolutionise how businesses across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) approach energy management and carbon reduction.

A Strategic Mind with Global Impact

Fokhrul Islam's journey in procurement excellence began with a fundamental belief: that strategic sourcing could be a powerful catalyst for positive change. At Global Procurement Group, he has championed this philosophy, developing innovative procurement strategies that not only deliver exceptional value but also drive environmental responsibility across supply chains.

"Procurement is a sustainability function." Islam explains. "It's about creating sustainable partnerships that benefit businesses, communities, and the planet. We're building the foundation for a more responsible future."

Why the GCC? Why Now?

The timing couldn't be more perfect. As the GCC nations accelerate their ambitious Net Zero commitments – Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, the UAE's Net Zero by 2050 pledge, and Bahrain's Economic Vision 2030 among others – businesses are desperately seeking practical solutions to reduce both costs and emissions. This is where clearvue.ae, the innovative energy management platform, steps in as the ideal partner, offering cutting-edge solutions to help businesses achieve their sustainability goals while driving significant cost savings.

"We're bringing a solution to the GCC that addresses the region's most pressing business challenges," explains Fokhrul Islam, the strategic mind behind this ambitious expansion. "With energy costs representing up to 30% of operational expenses for many Gulf businesses, and growing regulatory pressure to reduce emissions, clearvue.ae offers a pathway to achieve both economic and environmental objectives simultaneously."

ClearVUE: Where Innovation Meets Impact

ClearVUE is a real-time energy and carbon intelligence platform that gives asset-level consumption visibility, highlights anomalies, and turns complex data into auditable action. Its



Fokhrul Islam
CEO, GLOBAL PROCUREMENT GROUP

Photo: courtesy of energylivenews.com

proprietary sub-metering hardware collects high-resolution data, while intuitive tools help teams cut waste, evidence compliance, and improve performance across sites and systems.

Beyond Cost Savings: Building Sustainable Futures

While the financial benefits of energy management are compelling (customers already using the ClearVUE platform are seeing energy costs reduced by 20-35%), Islam's vision extends far beyond cost cutting. ClearVUE represents a fundamental shift towards intelligent energy management that supports the region's broader sustainability objectives.

The platform's carbon tracking capabilities provide businesses with detailed insights into their environmental impact, leading to actionable recommendations for improvement. For companies navigating increasingly complex ESG reporting requirements, this functionality proves invaluable in demonstrating tangible progress towards sustainability goals.

"Sustainability is about competitive advantage," Islam emphasises. "Businesses that embrace intelligent energy management today will be the market leaders of tomorrow. We're giving them the tools to get there."

Technology That Speaks the Region's Language

Islam and his team have meticulously adapted the platform to address the unique challenges facing GCC businesses. The extreme climate conditions, distinctive energy consumption patterns, and specific regulatory environments of the Gulf region require specialised solutions.

The system's sophisticated architecture includes real-time energy monitoring capabilities that track consumption patterns across multiple facilities, predictive analytics that anticipate usage spikes during the region's notorious summer months, and intelligent load management that can reduce peak demand charges by up to 25%.

"We began by understanding the Gulf business environment and built clearvue.ae to fit it," notes Islam." From managing the massive cooling requirements of shopping centres in 50-degree heat to optimising energy usage in 24/7 manufacturing operations, our platform delivers targeted solutions that make an immediate impact."

The Road Ahead

Fokhrul Islam is steering clearvue.ae across the GCC, aligning British software innovation with the region's sustainability objectives. ClearVUE integrates high-resolution monitoring, actionable analytics and clear reporting into one platform, enabling organisations to optimise performance, reduce emissions intensity and meet disclosure standards with confidence.

As the Middle East continues its transformation, energy intelligence becomes core infrastructure for a sustainable economy. This expansion delivers practical gains for enterprises and aligns with national sustainability agendas across the entire Gulf region. The future of energy management in the GCC is bright: powered by innovation, guided by expertise and delivered through ClearVUE's comprehensive platform.

> **"It's about creating sustainable partnerships that benefit businesses, communities, and the planet. We're building the foundation for a more responsible future.**
>
> FOKHRUL ISLAM

Clearvue.ae has now commenced operations across the GCC, with local support teams now ready to assist businesses in their journey towards energy efficiency and carbon reduction.

Established in 2017, ClearVUE is the sustainability-focused technology and consultancy division of Global Procurement Group (GPG). Headquartered in the UK and expanded to the UAE in 2025 with a new Dubai office, ClearVUE accelerates decarbonisation through digital innovation and expert



Photo: courtesy of northern-insight.co.uk

advisory, supporting organisations across Europe and the Middle East. ■

NAME	ROLE	ORGANISATION
Fokhrul Islam	CEO	Global Procurement Group



Photo: Masdar Official / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 2.0

ANALYSIS

Data residency in the Gulf: what technology leaders should plan for

BY THE CIO TABLE EDITORS



The question has moved from where data sits to who can reach it, and under which law. Four decisions to make this year, and the questions to put to every supplier.

For most of the past decade, data residency in the Gulf was treated as a question of geography. Where is the server? Is it in the country? Procurement asked, the supplier answered, and a contract clause closed the matter.

That question is no longer enough. Regulators, auditors and, increasingly, boards ask something harder: who can reach the data, and under which law. A database hosted in Riyadh or Abu Dhabi by a provider headquartered abroad may still sit within reach of a foreign court order. A support engineer overseas with administrative rights is, in practice, a point of cross-border access.

What changed

The legal ground has filled in quickly. Saudi Arabia's Personal Data Protection Law has been enforced since September 2024, after a one-year grace period, under the supervision of the Saudi Data and Artificial Intelligence Authority, and its implementing rules set conditions for transferring personal data out of the kingdom. The UAE's Federal Decree-Law No. 45 of 2021 sets a general regime for personal data but excludes government data, health and banking data where separate legislation applies, and free zones with their own regimes. The Dubai International Financial Centre and Abu Dhabi Global Market each have their own data protection law and regulator. Qatar, Bahrain and Oman have national laws, and other states are building theirs.

Sector rules sit on top. Government data is commonly subject to classification schemes and in-country hosting. Central banks expect to be consulted, and sometimes to approve, before regulated firms move material workloads to the cloud or offshore. Health data carries the strictest expectations; the UAE's federal law on health information generally requires such data to stay in the country.

The supply side has moved too. The large cloud providers now operate regions in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Bahrain, and several offer sovereign or government variants run by local staff. That removes an old excuse without settling the question of jurisdiction.

Why it reaches the board

Three reasons. First, the exposure is real: regulators can impose fines, and in licensed sectors the sanction that matters is a restriction on operating. Second, the decisions are long-lived. A choice of provider, region and key management model shapes the architecture for years. Third, the regimes overlap. A group with customers on the UAE mainland, in the DIFC and in Saudi Arabia may hold one customer record governed by three sets of rules. Somebody has to own the reconciliation, and directors will be asked whether they knew where sensitive data sat and who could open it.

Four decisions to make this year

Classify the data. Build an inventory that tags each data set by type (personal, sensitive, government, financial, health), by the regime that governs it and by who needs access. Without it, every hosting debate is opinion.

Choose regions by data class, not by application. Some data must stay in the country. Some can be stored locally and replicated elsewhere for resilience. Some can sit anywhere. Check that the services each class depends on are available in the local region; newer services, including some AI tools, often reach smaller regions later.

Settle the transfer basis. Group reporting, shared service centres, round-the-clock support and analytics all move data across borders. For each flow, record the legal mechanism under every regime that applies (contractual clauses, intra-group rules, consent or regulatory approval). Then make the contracts match: data location, subprocessors, notice of government requests, audit rights and exit.

Control the keys. Customer-managed encryption keys, held in hardware under the organisation's control or with a local custodian, are the most direct answer to "who can access it?" A provider that cannot decrypt cannot hand over readable data. The trade-off: the organisation takes on key management, and some managed services work less well, or not at all, with external keys.

Questions for suppliers

Ask for the answers in writing and attach them to the contract. The fifth question is the one most often skipped: the primary data may stay in the country while the diagnostic data describing it leaves every night. ■





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LEADERS IN FOCUS

Satya Nadella and the culture reset behind Microsoft's cloud turn

BY THE CIO TABLE EDITORS



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Before the cloud deals and the AI partnership came a quieter change: how Microsoft argued, decided and learned. What a decade of Nadella's leadership shows about fixing culture before strategy.

When Satya Nadella became Microsoft's third chief executive in February 2014, the company was profitable, enormous and widely described as having missed the move to mobile. A decade later it was one of the most valuable companies in the world, built around cloud services and artificial intelligence. The products changed, but the more instructive part of the story is what changed first: how the company decided, argued and learned.

An engineer who came up through the back office

Nadella joined Microsoft in 1992 and spent much of his career in the businesses customers rarely see: servers, developer tools and, later, the cloud and enterprise group that ran Azure. That background matters. He arrived in the top job already convinced that the company's future lay in infrastructure sold to other businesses, rather than in defending the Windows desktop.

Culture before strategy

His best-known early move was not a product but a vocabulary. Nadella borrowed the psychologist Carol Dweck's idea of a growth mindset and asked a famously competitive company to value learning over being right. Internal rivalry gave way, at least in part, to collaboration across divisions. In his 2017 book Hit Refresh he described the cultural shift as the precondition for everything else.

The practical consequences were visible quickly. Microsoft put Office on rival platforms, embraced Linux and open-source software it had once fought, and treated partners as partners. Each of those decisions made commercial sense only if the company stopped measuring itself by Windows.

Bets that compound

The acquisitions followed the same logic: LinkedIn in 2016, GitHub in 2018 and Activision Blizzard, completed in 2023 after a long regulatory review. So did the early and much-enlarged investment in OpenAI, which put Microsoft at the centre of the generative-AI boom and turned Azure into the platform many enterprises use to run it. Nadella became chairman of the board in 2021.

What other leaders can take from it

For technology leaders inside large organisations, the lesson is uncomfortable and useful: the platform you modernise matters less than whether the people around it are allowed to learn in public. ■





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