# **CHAPTER THREE**

## **Introduction to the Web**

The term "web" refers to the World Wide Web (WWW), a system of interlinked documents and multimedia resources that are accessed via the internet. Invented in 1989 by Sir Tim Berners-Lee, the web has revolutionized the way people communicate, access information, and interact with various services. Initially designed to facilitate academic and research-based information sharing, the web has grown to include everything from social media to e-commerce and public service platforms.

Web technologies operate through web browsers such as Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, and Microsoft Edge, enabling users to access resources hosted on servers worldwide. By leveraging the web, governments, organizations, and individuals have found innovative ways to deliver services efficiently and transparently.

## **Understanding Web-Based Public Services**

Web-based public services refer to the provision of government or public sector services through digital platforms accessible over the internet. These services are designed to enhance accessibility, reduce bureaucratic hurdles, and improve the overall experience of citizens in interacting with public authorities. Examples of such services include online tax filing, land registration, e-health services, e-education, and e-voting systems.

The advent of web-based public services marked a shift from traditional service delivery models, which often required physical presence and extensive paperwork, to streamlined, efficient, and user-friendly digital processes. These platforms are often integrated with databases and automated systems to provide real-time updates and reduce manual errors.

## **Evolution of Web-Based Public Services**

The journey of web-based public services began in the late 1990s as part of the broader global e-government movement. The United States and European countries were among the pioneers in adopting e-governance, launching initiatives to digitize public administration and make services more accessible to their citizens. For instance, the U.S. introduced its "E-Government Act" in 2002 to promote electronic government services and processes.

Asian nations such as South Korea and Singapore soon followed, implementing robust digital platforms that enabled citizens to access a wide range of public services online. These countries became global leaders in e-governance due to their early adoption of technology and focus on digital literacy.

## **Current Global Scenario of Web-Based Public Services**

Today, web-based public services are a cornerstone of governance in many countries. Developed nations, including Denmark, Estonia, and Finland, have established comprehensive digital ecosystems that allow citizens to perform tasks such as registering births, applying for passports, or accessing healthcare services entirely online. Estonia, for example, is renowned for its e-residency program and fully digitized government services, setting a global benchmark.

In developing countries, the adoption of web-based public services has been slower due to challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited internet access, and low digital literacy. However, initiatives like India’s Digital India program and Rwanda’s e-government platforms have demonstrated significant progress in bridging the digital divide. International organizations, including the United Nations, emphasize the importance of e-governance in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by promoting transparency, accountability, and inclusivity.

## **The Current Situation in Bangladesh**

In Bangladesh, web-based public services have been gradually gaining traction over the past decade. The government’s "Digital Bangladesh" initiative, launched in 2009, aims to transform the country into a knowledge-based economy by integrating digital technologies into various sectors. Union Digital Centers (UDCs) have been established across rural areas to provide citizens with access to online services such as birth registration, passport applications, and agricultural information.

Despite these advancements, challenges persist. Limited internet penetration in rural areas, low levels of digital literacy, and technical issues often hinder the effective delivery of web-based services. Additionally, a lack of public awareness about the availability of such services prevents many citizens from utilizing them. However, the government is working on expanding infrastructure, providing training programs, and introducing user-friendly platforms to address these barriers.

## **Legal and Policy Framework in Bangladesh**

The legal and policy framework for web-based public services in Bangladesh is shaped by several acts and initiatives:

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act, 2006: This act provides the legal foundation for promoting ICT use in governance and service delivery.

National ICT Policy, 2018: This policy outlines the government’s vision to use ICT as a tool for socio-economic development. It emphasizes the importance of e-governance and the delivery of web-based public services.

Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2009: By promoting transparency and accountability, this act indirectly supports the development of web-based platforms to facilitate access to information.

Digital Security Act, 2018: This act ensures the protection of digital platforms and the secure delivery of web-based services, though it has also faced criticism for its perceived restrictions on freedom of speech.

These laws and policies provide a framework for the development and regulation of web-based public services in Bangladesh. However, their successful implementation requires coordinated efforts among government agencies, private sector stakeholders, and civil society organizations.

## **Challenges and Opportunities**

* Infrastructure Gaps: Many rural areas in Bangladesh still lack reliable internet connectivity and electricity, making it difficult to access web-based services.
* Digital Literacy: A significant portion of the population lacks the skills needed to navigate online platforms effectively.
* Technical Issues: Outdated technology and limited technical support can cause delays and inefficiencies.
* Trust Issues: Concerns about data security and misuse of personal information often deter citizens from using online services.
* Mobile Penetration: With increasing mobile phone usage, mobile-friendly platforms could make web-based services more accessible.
* Private Sector Collaboration: Partnerships with private companies can help develop innovative solutions and improve service delivery.
* International Support: Bangladesh can leverage international funding and expertise to enhance its e-governance initiatives.

Web-based public services represent a transformative approach to governance, offering significant benefits such as improved accessibility, transparency, and efficiency. While developed nations have set global benchmarks in e-governance, countries like Bangladesh are making steady progress despite facing numerous challenges. By addressing issues related to infrastructure, digital literacy, and trust, Bangladesh can further enhance the effectiveness of its web-based public services, contributing to the broader goals of "Digital Bangladesh" and sustainable development. With continued investment in technology, education, and public awareness, web-based public services can play a pivotal role in improving the quality of life for citizens across the nation.