

Mintoo Takes Helm of Climate Ministry

The appointment of Abdul Awal Mintoo as Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change is more than a routine cabinet reshuffle—it marks a moment of pride for Feni and a significant responsibility for Bangladesh at a critical time in its climate journey.

A Member of Parliament from Feni-3 (Daganbhuiyan–Sonagazi), Mintoo took the oath on February 17, bringing to an end a long wait for cabinet representation for the people of his district.

For many in Feni, his elevation to the cabinet fulfills a hope that had been building since his decisive victory in the 13th National Parliamentary Election.

Mintoo is widely known as both a seasoned politician and a successful businessman. With more than three decades of involvement in agriculture, energy, and alternative energy, he brings practical industry experience to a ministry that sits at the center of Bangladesh's future.

In a world where climate change diplomacy has become one of the most complex global challenges, his appointment carries particular weight. For Bangladesh, among the countries most vulnerable to climate change, the task ahead is both urgent and delicate.

Many sector stakeholders believe Prime Minister Tarique Rahman considered Mintoo's diverse background carefully before entrusting him with this portfolio.

Feni has a notable political history. BNP's late chairperson, Khaleda Zia, was elected from Feni-1 and served three terms as Prime Minister. From the same constituency, Lt. Colonel (Retd.) Zafar Imam, Bir Bikrom, was elected as an MP and served as minister in several ministries, including Textiles and Jute, and later Forest and Environment.

However, after Khaleda Zia stepped down in 2006, the district went years



without cabinet representation. Mintoo's appointment, therefore, resonates not only politically but emotionally for his constituents.

In the recent election, Mintoo, who serves as Vice Chairman of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), contested from Feni-3 for the first time and won by a large margin. Speculation about his possible inclusion in the cabinet began almost immediately. Residents openly expressed their belief that his experience and stature made him a strong candidate for ministerial responsibility.

Beyond politics, Mintoo has long been a prominent figure in Bangladesh's business community. He served twice as president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) and has led several organizations at national and international levels. Over the years, he has received numerous awards in recognition of his contributions to business and industry.

His commitment to his home area is equally well known. In Daganbhuiyan, he has played a significant role in establishing schools, colleges, madrasas, and other educational and religious institutions. Industrial initiatives and factories supported by him have also contributed to local economic activity. Development, for

Mintoo, has never been an abstract concept—it has been closely tied to his roots.

Public service runs deep in his family. His late father, Haji Shafiqullah, served twice as chairman of Daganbhuiyan Upazila. His brother, Md. Akbar Hossain, served as mayor of Daganbhuiyan Municipality. His wife, Nasrin Fatema Awal, is chairperson of the Women Entrepreneurs Association of Bangladesh (WEAB). His eldest son, Tabith Awal, is president of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) and a member of BNP's National Executive Committee.

Born on February 22, 1949, in Aleyarpur village in Feni to a family of landowners, Mintoo's journey reflects both local grounding and global exposure. He completed his Secondary School Certificate from Feni Government Pilot High School in 1964 and earned his Higher Secondary School Certificate from Comilla Victoria College in 1966. In 1968, he obtained a diploma in nautical science from the Mercantile Marine Academy in Chittagong, then known as the Pakistan Marine Academy.

He later moved to the United States, graduating in 1973 with a Bachelor of Science in Marine Transportation from the State University of New York Maritime College. He went on to complete a master's degree in Transportation Management, with advanced studies in chartering and arbitration.

Now, as he steps into the role of Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister, Mintoo carries not only his personal experience and professional credentials but also the expectations of a climate-vulnerable nation and a proud constituency.

His tenure will be measured not just by policy pronouncements, but by how effectively he can position Bangladesh in global climate negotiations while safeguarding forests, biodiversity, and environmental resilience at home. **EP**