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## PRESS RELEASE

### Bangladesh Successfully Observes First International Lightning Safety Day 2025, Emphasizing Awareness and timely Early Warning

“শুনলে বজ্রধ্বনি, ঘরে যাই তখনই,”

**When Thunder Roars, Get Indoors**

**DHAKA, BANGLADESH – June 28, 2025 | Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Center, Dhaka** – Bangladesh witnessed another historic milestone as it celebrates the first International Lightning Safety Day with a national-level event. Organized under the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) funded consortium project - Scaling up Forecast-based Action and Learning in Bangladesh (SUFAL II), led by CARE Bangladesh with Concern Worldwide, and the Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System (RIMES), in collaboration with the Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD), the initiative aimed to significantly raise public awareness about lightning hazards and promote critical safety measures to reduce fatalities.

This inaugural observance was held under the powerful slogan in Bangla - “শুনলে বজ্রধ্বনি, ঘরে যাই তখনই,” **When Thunder Roars, Get Indoors** - a direct call-to-action designed to foster universal public awareness in response to the escalating number of lightning-related deaths across the nation. The event underscored that while advanced forecasting is crucial, behavioral change and the timely dissemination of accurate messages are equally vital in reducing lightning casualties.

The day's program commenced with **an inaugural session** led by Md. Mostafizur Rahman, Secretary of the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief. Mr. Rahman officially launched the day's Bangla slogan, emphasizing the combination of timely early warning and public awareness as the most effective tool in reducing lightning deaths. A Lightning Awareness brochure outlining the dos and don'ts for lightning safety was also launched and disseminated. A solidarity rally followed, engaging participants from different government, non-government, and humanitarian organizations along with students and youth groups in a visible demonstration of commitment to lightning safety.

The event proceedings were followed by a formal session where Mr. Raihanul Haque Khan, Country Program Lead for RIMES, an international and intergovernmental organization supporting the strengthening of the National forecasting Agencies in Bangladesh for more than a decade, delivered the welcome remarks and set the tone for the event. He highlighted the **remarkable success of the experimental Lightning Nowcasting System**, which has been rigorously tested by BMD with essential technical assistance from RIMES. He emphasized the **need for scaling up the system for long-term sustainability and integration of the system in BMD's operations** for providing timely and accurate alerts, thereby serving as a robust foundation for proactive disaster preparedness and saving lives across the country. He emphasized the **need for Government support** to continue the experimental lightning



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nowcasting system. He also urged the government to **observe the International Lightning Safety Day every year.**

Following the remarks, a technical session provided deeper insights into the lightning phenomenon in Bangladesh. **Khan Muhammad Golam Rabbani, Weather Expert of RIMES, proposed the Bangla Slogan for the International Lightning Safety Day and presented a comprehensive overview, including scientific data and prevalent misconceptions.** He noted that Bangladesh experiences approximately 3.36 million lightning strikes annually, leading to around 350 deaths, with Sunamganj, Netrokona, and Sylhet being the most affected districts. Lightning activity typically peaks between April and May in Bangladesh. Additionally, he acknowledged the lightning awareness initiatives under the **SUFAL II project, which educated 1,750 community members**—including farmers, women, and schoolchildren in Sylhet, Sunamganj and Netrokona districts—on basic lightning safety practices.

S.M. Quamrul Hassan, Deputy Director, BMD, subsequently **introduced the advanced lightning forecasting system, experimentally tested since April 1, 2025.** This system provides forecast 1–6 hour in advance leveraging satellite data, radar, and lightning detection technologies developed with RIMES's support. BMD has disseminated these alerts through its official website, social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp, and directly to listed beneficiaries of the SUFAL II project via pre-recorded audio messages.

A **subsequent panel discussion** focused on the strategies for improving the reach of early warnings including rigorous awareness programs across the country, multi-channel dissemination of alerts, critical integration of lightning safety into educational materials, etc. Participants from key institutions including Mr. Ahmadul Haque, Additional Secretary, Director, Cyclone Preparedness Programme, Ministry of Disaster Management & Relief, Mr. Razwanur Rahman, Director General, Department of Disaster Management, Md. Momenul Islam, Director, Bangladesh Meteorological Department and Ms. Urmee Ahsan, Deputy Director, Department of Agricultural Extension, engaged in a robust dialogue. Panelists emphasized the urgent need for curriculum integration, enhanced inter-agency collaboration, and the development of localized communication strategies to effectively reach at-risk populations. The emphasis on securing government investment for scale up and long-term sustainability of the lightning early warning system was recognized unanimously. They encouraged the involvement of youth groups, Scout, Girls Guide, volunteer groups in spreading the lightning awareness message to the at risk communities. Participants also engaged in a constructive discussion, sharing valuable insights and recommendations for future actions.

The event concluded with a pledge from the Chief Guest, Md. Mostafizur Rahman, Secretary of the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, reaffirming the Ministry's commitment to undertaking the necessary actions and providing support to prevent lightning-related deaths and raise public awareness. Mr. Rahman emphasized the importance of addressing lightning risks with the same dedication that has helped Bangladesh significantly reduce casualties from other disasters such as floods and cyclones.



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The successful observance of International Lightning Safety Day 2025 marks a significant stride in Bangladesh's comprehensive efforts to mitigate lightning-related deaths through an integrated approach encompassing advanced forecasting, public education, and robust community outreach. (30)