

Outrage at RU after teacher labels Begum Rokeya ‘murtad-kafir’ on Facebook

Staff Correspondent . Rajshahi  10 December, 2025, 16:16

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Fron view of Rajshahi University. | File photo

A Facebook post by a Rajshahi University teacher describing Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain — a pioneer of women’s education and a revered social reformer — as a ‘kafir-murtad’ (apostate) has sparked widespread outrage among students and progressive organisations on the campus.

On Tuesday morning, Khandaker Muhammad Mahmudul Hasan, associate professor of the physics department, shared a Facebook post from another user and added the caption: ‘Today is the birthday of the murtad-kafir Begum Rokeya.’ The post quickly went viral, triggering anger and condemnation online.

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Students from several departments said the remark was insulting and deeply offensive to the legacy of a national figure who championed female education during the colonial era.

‘Calling Begum Rokeya a murtad is not only hateful, it is an attack on the values of women’s emancipation she stood for,’ said Farhana Akter, a third-year student of social sciences.

Teachers also voiced alarm over such views coming from a member of the academic community. Some questioned whether students — particularly female students from diverse backgrounds — would feel comfortable attending his classes.

RU Chhatra Union general secretary Parama Parmita said that Begum Rokeya was a trailblazer of women’s education and humanistic values in the subcontinent. ‘She was never anti-religion; rather, she fought against superstition, discrimination and ignorance — values upheld by Islam as well as other religions,’ she added.

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The associate professor could not be reached for comment despite repeated attempts. However, in earlier Facebook exchanges, he defended himself, saying critics should read the full post or consult a ‘competent scholar’ if they disagreed.

RU pro-vice-chancellor Professor Mohammad Main Uddin said the university did not endorse such personal opinions. He said the authorities would look into the matter if a formal written complaint was submitted.