

RU calls for declaring Feb 18 as National Teacher Day

Staff Correspondent . Rajshahi ✉ 18 February, 2026, 23:37

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Teachers, students and various social, political and cultural organisations at Rajshahi University on Wednesday renewed their longstanding demand for declaring February 18 as 'National Teacher Day' in recognition of the sacrifice of martyred professor Mohammad Shamsuzzoha.

Chemistry professor Shamsuzzoha, then proctor of the university, was shot dead by the Pakistani army in front of the university's main gate on February 18, 1969, while he was trying to protect students who had brought out a procession defying Section 144.

His death intensified the mass uprising against the Pakistani regime and accelerated the movement demanding withdrawal of the Agartala Conspiracy Case.

The agitation had spread across the country from February 15, 1969 following the killing of Sergeant Zahurul Haque, one of the accused in the case, by Pakistani military personnel while in custody.

To mark the day, university authorities placed wreaths at Professor Zoha's grave and memorial and also organised other programmes, including a discussion meeting, Qur'an recitation and special prayers.

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After paying tributes, university vice-chancellor Professor Saleh Hasan Naqib said that Professor Shamsuzzoha's martyrdom had far-reaching historical significance.

'He was an iconic figure whose sacrifice inspired the 1969 mass uprising and accelerated the country's journey towards independence,' the vice-chancellor said.

He added that the university had long been demanding national recognition of the day.

'We believe this recognition is his due,' said the vice-chancellor.

'His historical contribution and the nation's gratitude should be reflected through state acknowledgement and observance across all educational institutions,' stated the VC, expressing hope that the government would consider the demand.

Students also emphasised the historical importance of the day.

Mahabub Alam, a mass communication and journalism student, said that Professor Shamsuzzoha's sacrifice represented an invaluable example of a teacher standing beside students during a critical moment in history.

He said that the 1969 movement had helped shape the political momentum that later culminated in the War of Independence.

Later in the day, the chemistry department, in association with the university administration, organised a discussion at the Senate Building.

Vice-chancellor Saleh Hasan Naqib attended the programme as chief patron, while pro-vice-chancellors Professor Mohammad Main Uddin and Professor Farid Uddin Khan and treasurer Professor Matiar Rahman spoke as patrons.

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Writer and political historian Mohiuddin Ahmad presented the keynote paper at the discussion, which was chaired by chemistry department chair Professor Choudhury M Zakaria. Special prayers were also offered after Zuhr prayers at the university central mosque.

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The university museum, which preserves the memories of martyred intellectuals, Professor Zoha among them, remained open for visitors from 8:00am to 5:00pm, while a composition writing competition on his life and contributions was also held.