

Bailey Road fire: Journalist's body yet to be released as confusion over her identity lingers

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Online Desk :

The uncertainty surrounding the identity of Abhishruti Shastri, the female journalist who died in the Bailey Road fire, has yet to be resolved, delaying the handover of her remains. Efforts are underway to verify her identity through DNA testing, according to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Vice-Chancellor Sharfuddin Ahmed, a member of the 17-strong medical board overseeing the treatment of the injured. Reports in various media outlets on Saturday indicated that Abhishruti's body was returned to her family after her name was confirmed as Brishti Khatun through a fingerprint test. Asked about the veracity of the reports, Sharfuddin said the woman's identity has yet to be confirmed, adding that efforts were underway to identify her through DNA testing. Health Minister Samanta Lal Sen also said that the forensic department was actively investigating the matter.

On Thursday, Abhishruti went to dine at the popular biriyani joint Kacchi Bhai at Green Cozy Cottage on Bailey Road, accompanied by Tushar Howladar, another young journalist. They were colleagues at The Report Dot Live, an online media outlet, before Tushar left to join an online multimedia company. But tragedy struck when a fire tore through the seven-storey, claiming the lives of 46 people, including Abhishruti and Tushar. While the remains of 43 victims have been returned to their loved ones, the handover of Abhishruti's body has been held up due to uncertainty surrounding her identity. Upon hearing the news of his daughter's death, her father Sabrul Alam Sabuj hurried to Dhaka's Sheikh Hasina Burn and Plastic Surgery Institute. He asserted that his daughter's name was Bristhi Khatun. Abhishruti, or Brishti, recently left The Report Dot Live to join another media outlet.

Known as Abhishruti Shastri among her colleagues, her name is also listed as such on Facebook. Additionally, she was known for her regular visits to the temple for prayers. Various discrepancies have since been uncovered in the birth registration certificate, national identity card, Eden College admit card, and job birth certificate of the woman, who was in her 20s. Upon arriving to collect his daughter's body, Sabrul Alam said, "Abhishruti is my daughter. She was born on Dec 25." "Her nickname is Brishti Khatun. She has been known as Brishti in the village, during her schooling at Kushtia Government Women's College, while enrolled at Eden College in Dhaka, and while pursuing her degree in philosophy." Discrepancies were found in her birth registration certificate, national identity card, admit card for second year final exams at Eden College, and her job resume, particularly regarding the names of her parents. However, her permanent address remains consistent across all documents. In the national identity card issued on Jul 6, 2021, her name appears as Brishti Khatun, with her father listed as Sabuj Sheikh and mother as Beauty Begum. Similar information is found in her college admit card.

Upon presenting the NID card bearing the name Brishti Khatun, Sabrul was detained by the police on suspicion of fraud. He was subsequently released after questioning. Although her birth certificate, issued on Oct 23, 2022, lists her name as Abhishruti, the father's name is noted as Md Saburul Alam and the mother's name as Beauty Begum. Her name is also listed as Abhishruti Shastri in her job resume, however, her mother's name is recorded as Aparna Shastri. The date of birth recorded on both her birth registration certificate and birth certificate is Dec 25, 2000. However, the national identity card states her date of birth as Dec 25, 1998. Discussions surrounding Abhishruti's religious affiliation have also surfaced on social media. Facebook user Mahfuzur Rahman, who identified himself as a 'close friend' of Abhishruti's mentioned in a post that he possessed the necessary information to resolve the questions surrounding her religious identity.