

## Student Welfare Department

Report

On

**Condolences Expressed to Colonel Santosh Babu**

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Submitted by

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### **Summary Report on Condolences Expressed to Colonel Santosh Babu**

Colonel Bikkumalla Santosh Babu (1982 – 15 June 2020) was an Indian military officer in the Indian Army and the commanding officer of 16 Bihar Regiment. He was killed in action during the 2020 China–India skirmishes, the first Indian Armed Forces commissioned officer since 1967 and among the first Indian soldiers to have been killed in action against the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) since 1975. A native of Suryapet in Telangana, Babu was the only son of Bikkumalla Upender, a retired manager with the State Bank of India and his wife Manjula. From 1988 to 1993, during his Class I to Class V years, he studied in Sri Saraswathi Shishumandir School at Luxettipet in Mancherial district. He was described by his schoolmates and teachers as a brilliant student. After primary school, Santosh was accepted to a Sainik School in Korukonda, Vizianagaram district, where he studied through Class XII. In 2010, Babu married Santoshi. The couple had a daughter Abhigna (aged nine at her father's death) and a son Anirudh (aged four). His family resided in Delhi.

Babu enrolled in the Indian Military Academy, and subsequently joined the 105th Course of the National Defence Academy (NDA) at Pune, Maharashtra in 2004. During his time at the NDA, he belonged to the "November" squadron. He was commissioned a lieutenant in 16 Bihar on 10 December 2004, one of 105 successful cadets. After passing out, he was posted to Jammu and Kashmir state.

He was promoted to captain on 10 December 2006, followed by promotion to major on 10 December 2010. He attended the Defence Services Staff College at Wellington. During his service, he was attached to the Rashtriya Rifles in Jammu and Kashmir, and also served with the UN peacekeeping force in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) during the ongoing Kivu conflict. Colleagues who served with him described him as "empathetic, yet bold." During a major joint operation conducted by DRC and South African forces against Nduma Defense of Congo (NDC) rebels, Babu and his unit were caught in cross-fire, yet his bold actions prevented the rebels from inflicting casualties on the joint force. During his posting in the Congo, Babu was described as kind and generous towards local residents, assisting them with medical and other needs.

Babu was promoted lieutenant-colonel on 10 December 2017. He received another posting to Jammu and Kashmir in 2019, and assumed command of 16 Bihar in December 2019. He was promoted full colonel in February 2020.<sup>[2]</sup> At the time of his death, he was expecting to be posted to Hyderabad.

Following high-level talks during the 2020 skirmishes with the PLA in eastern Ladakh, 16 Bihar monitored the Chinese forces in the Galwan Valley to ensure their disengagement. On 14 June, a group of PLA troops erected tents and an observation post on the LAC in contravention of an agreement made on 6 June. After observing an apparent lack of inclination by PLA troops to move from their positions, Babu personally led a delegation to the Chinese on the night of 15 June, though normally a company commander with the rank of major would have been asked to handle the situation.

Observing the Chinese soldiers were different from those Babu and his soldiers had previously spoken with, Colonel Babu attempted to ask them why they had erected the observation post. A PLA soldier then reportedly shoved the colonel while cursing him in Chinese, causing the Indian

Accredited by NAAC

soldiers to engage the PLA troops in a 30-minute fistfight. Both sides sustained injuries, though the Indian troops succeeded in beating the Chinese and destroying their observation post. Though Babu himself sustained severe wounds, he calmed his men down, sent the wounded soldiers back to base and called for reinforcements. The PLA troops then attacked the Indian troops, whom they outnumbered three to one, with sticks, stones and clubs wrapped in barbed wire. In response, the soldiers of 16 Bihar charged the PLA soldiers with bayonets, and also attacked them with their own iron rods and clubs. PLA reinforcements then began throwing large stones at the Indian troops. Apparently by chance, one struck Babu on the head at around 9 p.m., causing him to fall into the Galwan River. Two other soldiers, Havildar Palani and Sepoy Kundan Ojha, also suffered serious injuries and succumbed to wounds, while 17 other soldiers and junior commissioned officers also died from various injuries.

Babu's body was flown by military aircraft to the military airport at Hakimpet in Telangana, arriving at 7 p.m. local time on 17 June. From there, his remains were driven to his family's farm at Kesaram village in Suryapet. His body was cremated with full military honours at around 12 p.m. local time on 18 June, with his father lighting the funeral pyre. Despite the ongoing COVID-19 epidemic, his funeral was attended by thousands of mourners from the area, with police on hand to ensure distancing and hygiene were maintained.

Following Babu's death, Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao announced the state government would award his family an *ex gratia* payment of ₹5 crore , along with a residential plot and a Group-I government job for his wife Santoshi. The chief minister also announced the state would award ₹10 lakh ) each to the families of the 19 other soldiers who had been killed. CM Chandrasekhar Rao visited Santosh Babu's home at Suryapet June 22 to give the strength and to assure the support of Telangana Government.

**Photographs with Description:**