

Hon'ble Dr. Barnaba Marial Benjamin, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Government of the Republic of South Sudan

H.E. Ms. Hilde Johnson, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General

Force Commander Maj Gen Delali Johnson,

Members of the UN Mission in South Sudan

Members of Indian Battalion and UN Police attached to UNMISS

Ladies and Gentlemen

We have gathered here today to pay homage to our brave Indian soldiers Warrant Officer Dharmesh Sangwan and Warrant Officer Kumar Pal Singh of the INDIAN Battalion attached to the UN Mission in South Sudan. These young courageous Indian soldiers who were deployed at the UN Base at Akobo, Jonglei on a critical mission of providing protection to the civilians in the area lost their lives in a senseless attack on the UN Base by some armed assailants. What happened at Akobo on 19 December has shocked and stunned all of us.

On my return to Juba on the evening of 19 December, after a month long duty and leave at Delhi, this was not the first news that one had expected on arrival. It is a very sad and unfortunate incident and a very challenging and difficult time for all of us since we heard of this tragic news 2 days ago. These young Indian soldiers who were barely 30 and 40 years old had whole life in front of them. But sad, their lives have been cut short in this mindless attack.

The UN Mission and the entire peacekeeping force are on a peace mission. They are here for a noble cause, protecting civilian lives, for peace building in the youngest country of the world, to help and facilitate the process of nation building and the economic development of the South Sudan. India is the largest provider of peace keeping troops to the UN and they have made exemplary efforts to help and protect the civilian lives in this country, which has been appreciated by all. To attack the UN peacekeepers is a very very cowardly act. Sadly and unfortunately, in South Sudan, seven of our soldiers have laid their lives during the performance of their duties.

We strongly condemn this senseless attack on the peacekeepers attached to UNMISS and I request the UN and the Government of the Republic of South Sudan to thoroughly investigate this incident. Those responsible for this dastardly act should be held accountable and brought to justice.

The events of last one week have been somewhat disturbing. The international community has lot of expectations from the youngest country of the world. We sincerely hope that the concerned parties would resolve their differences peacefully and through negotiations. We urge them to shun violence and devote their strength for peace, reconciliation and development of the country.

Warrant Officers Dharmesh Sangwan and Kumar Pal Singh displayed indomitable courage and unflinching commitment towards their duty and the UNMISS Mandate. The courage, professionalism, dedication, untiring efforts and devotion to duty displayed by these two brave Indian soldiers is remarkable and unmatched.

We convey our deepest and heartfelt condolences to the family members, friends, and colleagues, on the sad and sudden demise of Warrant Officers Dharmesh Sangwan and Kumar Pal Singh. Our thoughts and prayers are with their families, friends, loved ones and their Unit. May God give them enough courage and strength to bear this monumental and irreparable loss.

In the end, I would like to say that today, as we pay homage to these brave hearts, we feel extremely proud and honored by their ultimate sacrifice as they have laid their lives for a noble and just cause. Their sacrifice will not go in vain. The entire nation mourns their loss. We would miss them and never forget them.

As you embark on your final journey, Good bye Warrant Officers Dharmesh Sangwan and Kumar Pal Singh. Rest in peace.

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