

Unable to fix date to implement OROP'

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Union defence minister Manohar Parrikar at Walchand Hall, Churchgate in Mumbai on Friday. (Photo: SatejShinde)

Defence minister Manohar Parrikar on Friday said that he is unable to fix a date to implement One Rank One Pension (OROP) scheme for ex-servicemen owing to the complications involved in the highly structured military hierarchy system. While saying that contributions of former military personnel cannot be quantified by any amount of money, he also clarified that the government too cannot overcome certain monetary constraints while compensating them.

“OROP was not fully understood by the earlier UPA government itself and neither did we ourselves understand the full implications of the same. However, all formalities with this regard have been completed and it is now with the finance ministry,” said Mr Parrikar while interacting at a gathering at the Indian Merchant’s Chamber (IMC) at Mumbai. The statement was in response to a question asked by the son of a senior retired army officer. The OROP scheme means to provide the same amount of pension for officers who retire at a particular rank. Currently, two officers who have retired at the same rank get differing amounts based on the retiree’s service history, tenure of service, gallantry awards and mode of selection up the hierarchy – whether selected or promoted up by virtue of seniority.

The scheme is estimated to cost around Rs 8,600 crore initially and, subsequently, several crore rupees annually. Currently, all pre-2006 pensioners receive lesser pension than not only their counterparts but also their juniors. Ex-servicemen are also entitled to a year’s back pay in pensions at the new rates, thus proving to be a big windfall for the pensioners. “The finance ministry will do the detailing and will get it approved,” he said.

The defence minister also claimed that incidents of firing across the border by Pakistan have come in the last few months.

“The firing across the LoC used to take place to keep our forces engaged and diverted thereby helping terrorists to infiltrate.

Also, whenever bunkers and other infrastructure is repaired, Pakistan would take the opportunity to fire at us across the border, at a time we are even more engaged and vulnerable,” he said.