

Saturday, 18 June, 2016

Centre for gender parity in armed forces: Parrikar

Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar on Saturday asserted that it was the endeavour of the Centre to bring gender parity in the Armed Forces. However, he said he would be discussing the nitty-gritty with the service chiefs before taking step forward.

“Any move in the direction of ushering in gender parity has to be a smooth affair. It cannot be a forced operation,” he told presspersons after reviewing an impressive Combined Graduation Parade at the Air Force Academy, Dundigal near here on Saturday. He asserted that ‘step by step’, total gender parity would be achieved.

Presenting ‘wings and brevets’ to 129 Cadets, including 22 women here at the parade, he officially commissioned them into service as Flying Officers. “It is a golden day and should be opening up for more women to join the armed forces,” he said, referring to the three Cadets – Avani Chaturvedi, Bhavana Kanth and Mohana Singh, who became the country’s first women fighter pilots.



Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar with the country's first women fighter pilots — Bhavana Kanth, Avani Chaturvedi and Mohana Singh, during their Combined Graduation Parade at Air Force Academy in Dundigal, near Hyderabad on Saturday. Photo: K.V.S. Giri

Expressing the hope that more women would volunteer for combat duties, he said it was a challenge when it came to having the required women-friendly infrastructure in place. Citing an example, he said the women would need separate hostels and washrooms and a host of related facilities. For now, the government was going ahead with a need-based approach, he stated.

Speaking to presspersons later, Mr. Parrikar said the endeavour of the Centre was to usher in gender parity in the Armed Forces. However, he said that a completely different set of infrastructure was required to be put in place and that would take some time. As of now, he said they were going ahead with a need-based approach. As the first women in a combat role, we chose the best, he said.

On the need for a Chief of Defence Staff for the Armed Forces in India, he said it was on the anvil and that the country was close to undertake efforts in that direction.

Referring to proposals being considered for export of the Akash and BrahMos missile systems, Mr. Parrikar said that it was tentatively decided to export 10 per cent of them to countries who were interested, while keeping the remaining 90 per cent for use by India. While Akash is a mid-range surface-to-air missile developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), BrahMos is a short-range supersonic missile developed together by the DRDO and Russia's NPO Mashinostroyeniya.