

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:593

ANSWERED ON:26.07.2000

RELEASE OF RUSSIAN PILOTS

DINESH CHANDRA YADAV;GADDE RAMAMOCHAN;M.V.V.S MURTHI;RAM JEEVAN SINGH;SHIVAJI MANE

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Union Government have received any request from the Russian Government for release of five pilots who are accused in Purulia arms drop case ;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the reaction of the Government thereto?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA)

a) Yes, Sir.

b & c) The Russian leadership had at various levels raised the issue of pardon/clemency for the pilots. The family members of the crew had appealed for mercy. The State Duma of the Russian Federation (Lower House of the Russian Parliament) had adopted a Statement on February 9, 2000 seeking mercy to allow the convicted pilots to return home. The Government of India maintained that this case would be decided and a lasting solution found within the four corners of Indian law.

Taking into consideration the strength of Indo-Russian relations, which are time tested and are being consolidated into a strategic partnership, as also the humanitarian dimensions of the problem, and after careful consideration and in pursuance of powers conferred under Article 72 of the Constitution of India, the President of India was pleased to remit, with immediate effect, the unexpired sentence of imprisonment of the five Russian pilots.