

Air India bombing anniversary comes with apology

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Special

Blinded by a piercing, late-evening sun, families of the victims of the Air India bombing finally got an official government apology — 25 years to the day their loved ones perished.

Standing before the Air India Memorial in Humber Bay Park East in Etobicoke on Wednesday night, Prime Minister Stephen Harper apologized on behalf of the federal



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government and all Canadians “for the institutional failings of 25 years ago and the treatment of the victims’ families thereafter.”

For families, the apology acknowledged their decades of suffering.

“It feels rather surreal,” said Mississauga’s Lata Pada, whose daughters and husband were on Flight 182, which exploded off the coast of Ireland, killing all 329 aboard. Most of Flight 182’s passengers were Canadian. The majority of those lived in Toronto, while 29 were from Mississauga. Eighty-two of them were children aged 12 and younger.

“I came here when the memorial opened (in 2007). I never thought I’d come back to this place to hear

an open public apology of the wrongdoing, that the government had not taken the threat seriously, much less hear an apology from the prime minister. It is a very important moment in our (Canadian) history, especially for families.”

Guests included Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty, Toronto Mayor David Miller, Dr. Bal Gupta, chair

of the Air India Victims Families Association, the high commissioner from India, as well as ambassadors from Ireland, the United States and Japan.

Last week, retired Supreme Court Justice John Major issued the long-awaited, scathing final inquiry report, in which he referred to “a cascading series of errors.”

The report said the govern-

ment should have known the flight could have been a possible target, and blamed “turf wars” between the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) and glaring lapses in airport security for failing to prevent the tragedy.

Last week, Harper called Major’s findings “a damning indictment.”

Harper stressed the disaster was not an act of foreign violence, but a singular Canadian tragedy.

“This atrocity was conceived in Canada, executed in Canada, by Canadian citizens and its victims were themselves mostly citizens of our country. We do wish this realization had gained common acceptance earlier.”

No damage after earthquake rattles residents

Did you feel the earth move?

A magnitude 5.0 earthquake, centred on the Ontario/Quebec border, was also felt Wednesday afternoon across Mississauga, the Greater Toronto Area and most of Ontario.

The quake, which was also felt in parts of the northeastern United States, according to reports, struck at 1:43 p.m. and lasted about 30 seconds. In Mississauga, the tremors measured between 3.0 and 4.0.

Residents in some Mississauga high-rises were evacuated.

Transit, electricity and phone lines were not disrupted by the quake.

Kingsbridge Garden Circle resident Nazir Patel was sitting on the couch, waiting for his wife, when he felt the earth move.

“The whole building started to shake,” said Patel, whose fourth-floor condo is near Square One. His building was not evacuated. “It lasted just

a few seconds, but it was really shaking. When she came in, I told my wife to get ready because this could be the start of something big.”

Marguerite Schaffer, who lives in Sherwood Forest, near Dundas St. W. and Erin Mills Pkwy., said she knew something was amiss when her

grandfather clock began “clanging” uncontrollably.

“There was this big vibration and we felt the earth shaking. We could hear the metal on part of the roof scraping,” Schaffer told *The News*.

Francisco Henriques, 70, who lives near Bloor St. and Cawthra Rd., said

he felt nothing, but his daughter called from her Etobicoke office at Hwy. 427 and the QEW to tell him she felt the whole building shake.

Some residents reported items knocked off shelves, doors slamming closed in their homes and beds shaking.

Today’s flyers

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