

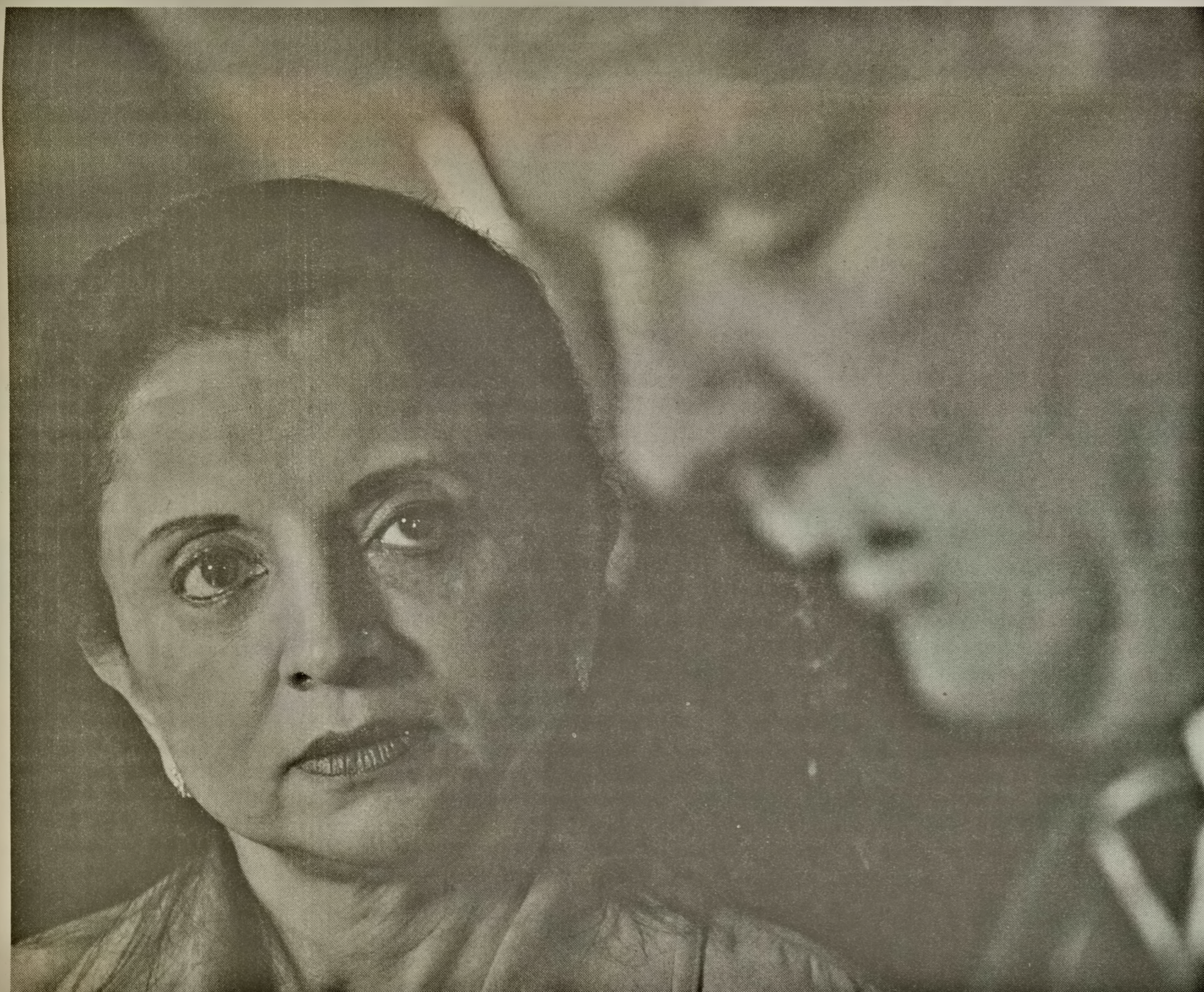
TIMELINE

Accompanied by Inderjit Singh Reyat and another unidentified man dubbed Mr. X, the trio sets off explosives in the woods. **June 23, 1985** A bomb explodes at Japan's Narita airport in a Vancouver suitcase tagged for an Air India flight. Two baggage handlers are killed. Less than an hour later, Air India Flight 182 blows up off the coast of Ireland, killing all aboard. **Nov. 8, 1985** Parmar and Reyat are arrested

in connection with the Air India bombing. Charges against Parmar are dropped and Reyat is fined for a minor explosives charge. **May 9, 1991** Reyat is convicted of fabricating the bomb that killed the baggage handlers at Narita Airport. He is sentenced to 10 years for manslaughter. **Oct. 27, 2000** Malik and Ajaib Singh Bagri are charged with conspiracy to murder in connection with the bombings of Air India Flight 182 and at Narita Airport. **June 6, 2001** Reyat is charged in Air India Flight 182 bombing. **Feb. 10,**

2003 Reyat pleads guilty to manslaughter and is sentenced to five years in jail. **April 28, 2003** The trial of Malik and Bagri begins in B.C. Supreme Court. **Dec. 3, 2004** After 19 months and 232 court days, the Crown and defence rest. **March 16, 2005** Bagri and Malik are found not guilty of conspiracy to commit murder. **May 2006** Retired Supreme Court of Canada Justice John Major is appointed to head an inquiry into the Air India bombing and subsequent police investigation. *Canwest News Service*

AIR INDIA REPORT



CHRIS WATTIE / REUTERS

Lata Pada, left, listens as Public Safety Minister Vic Toews responds to the final report on the bombing of Air India Flight 182, on Parliament Hill yesterday. Pada's husband and two daughters were killed in the bombing.

CSIS, RCMP locked in turf war

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In one of his more damning passages, Justice Major called CSIS surveillance ineffective.

"Surveillants were unable to distinguish one traditionally attired Sikh from another. When the CSIS surveillance team observed experiments involving a test explosion carried out by Sikh extremists in the woods in Duncan, B.C., in June 1985, the loud sound was misinterpreted as a gunshot. No photograph was taken of the unknown third person present because the surveillants had not brought a camera."

If CSIS was bumbling, the RCMP appear to have been outright incompetent. On the day of the bombing, the canine bomb-sniffing unit was unavailable, despite the RCMP having received a Telex from Air India earlier that month forecasting a terrorist attack by means of explosives hidden in checked baggage.

James Bartleman, who was head of intelligence at the Department of Foreign Affairs, testified that, before the bombing, he saw a specific threat to Flight 182. Justice Major said he believed that testimony, despite attacks by government lawyers designed to undermine Mr. Bartleman's credibility. Consequently, the judge said the failure of the government to implement anti-sabotage measures was "inexcusable."

It is hard to know what is more disturbing — the bush-league nature of the government agencies charged with our national security or the slickness of their protracted efforts to cover up mistakes that cost more than 300 people their lives.

After the bombing, the government was more focused on defending its reputation and protecting itself from liability than in finding out what happened — a state of denial that extended to issuing instructions to avoid referring to the crash as a "bombing." Canada

took the position that there was no evidence of a bomb.

A civil claim by families was settled in its early stages, before the government was obliged to hand over documents that would have revealed the June 1985 Telex from Air India. Department of Justice lawyers maintained that there was no basis for criticism of any government agency and no need to change any policies or procedures dealing with inter-agency co-operation.

Yet the grim saga of Flight 182 has a subplot of a sibling rivalry between the RCMP and CSIS — two agencies that have never been able to play nicely together. The RCMP was only interested in information it could use in court, while CSIS operated by the mantra that it did not collect evidence. The two agencies communicated only sporadically and even indulged themselves in acrimonious disputes over sources.

While Justice Major acknowledges things have improved, the two remain locked in a turf war over which should take the lead on fighting terrorism. RCMP boss William Elliot said recently he believes law enforcement and criminal prosecution are the "new paradigm" for national security — a sentiment, it is fair to speculate, which CSIS director Richard Fadden does not share.

One of Justice Major's key findings was that there is a lack of institutional co-ordination when it comes to national security matters — a problem that could be eased by beefing up the role of Canada's national security advisor to improve the passage of information between the intelligence and law enforcement communities.

But perhaps the strongest message in the report is that it's high time that the state acknowledged the insult it has added to families already grievously injured. "The government seemed dedicated to self-justification and the denial of fault that led it to cast a blind eye and a deaf ear to the suffering and needs of the families," Justice Major said. "No one on behalf of the government of Canada or its agencies has thought it appropriate to offer an apology."

Now that the official verdict is in on a veritable Niagara Falls of cascading errors, the state must acknowledge that it fell short of its first responsibility — that is, to keep its citizens safe from its enemies.

National Post

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Smiles, tears and thanks for Justice Major

'25-YEAR STRUGGLE'

Families of the victims gather in Ottawa

By KIM BOLAN

OTTAWA • Families of the Air India victims who gathered in Ottawa smiled, cried and thanked Justice John Major for his report into the devastating 1985 terrorist attack that forever changed their lives.

Bal Gupta, a Toronto man who lost his wife in the bombing, has been the public face of the Air India Victims' Families Association for much of the past 25 years.

He said the report appears to address most of the concerns the families raised during 19 months of evidence at the public inquiry.

And he pointed out how for the first decade of lobbying by the families, they couldn't get a Cabinet minister to even meet with them.

"The families ... have [been] struggling for the last 25 years against all odds, where we were not even allowed to meet any government minister for the first 10 years," he said after a meeting with Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

"Keeping that in mind, almost 25 years later, I think the report addresses most ... of the concerns families raised. It confirms what families suspected when asking for the inquiry — that it was not a sheer accident, that it was the compounding of mistake after mistake after mistake, both before the tragedy and after the tragedy and during the investigation and the prosecution."

Rob Alexander lost his father in the bombing.

He said the release of the report was "bittersweet" as

the 25th anniversary of the bombing comes next week, on June 23.

"It is a very big day for the families. We have been waiting a very long time," he said.

"It takes time to go through the report, but hopefully some good things will come out of this. We are optimistic now, more so than ever. Whether the government implements it, that is another story. We hope they take the recommendations seriously."

Mr. Alexander said the report points to the systemic failures of government agencies both before and after the bombing.

"The families, as a group, kind of knew some of the causes leading up to the actual bombing but when it is actually in print, recognized by the Canadian government, it's different," he said.

"I was impressed with that — that they went that far and gave the report some teeth."

Lata Pada, of Mississauga, lost her husband and two daughters when Air India Flight 182 exploded off the coast of Ireland, killing all 329 aboard.

"It remains to be seen how they will be implemented," Ms. Pada said of the report's recommendations. "Obviously there are complexities. It will take time and we are willing to wait. We have waited for 25 years," she said.

She said she hoped the report would eliminate what she described as Canada's soft-on-terrorism reputation.

"Remember that this report is going to have international implications. Remember that for over two decades Canada was seen as a country that harbours terrorism, is soft on terrorism," Ms. Pada said.

"I think this report and the strong recommendations it makes is going to prove that Canada is going to continue to be as vigilant as it can be."

Canwest News Service

RIGHTS BODY BOARD MUST GO: REPORT

Ottawa Emotionally charged differences of opinion over the Arab-Israeli conflict have been "a significant factor" in the months of turmoil at Rights and Democracy and its government-appointed board of directors should be fired and replaced, a House of Commons committee said in a report yesterday. The Conservative government's minority MPs on the foreign affairs committee issued a dissenting report on that recommendation, saying, "we want to express our confidence in the board of directors and thank them for their perseverance during these difficult incidents." The committee recommended measures aimed at making the agency more transparent and accountable for spending and recommends the auditor-general conduct a review of the organization every five years. *Canwest News Service*

ONTARIO STATUS INDIANS TO GET HST BREAK

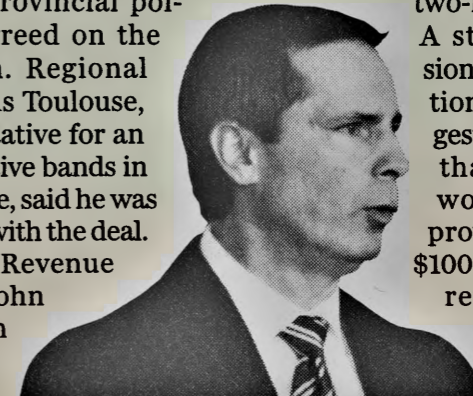
Toronto decades-old sales tax exemption for status Indians will continue with the new harmonized sales tax, provincial officials said yesterday. The announcement comes after months of increasing agitation among natives, who had threatened to set up blockades as early as Monday unless federal and provincial politicians agreed on the exemption. Regional Chief Angus Toulouse, a representative for an array of native bands in the province, said he was "satisfied" with the deal.

Ontario Revenue Minister John Wilkinson said the

agreement was reached yesterday. Because it happened so late in the game, the exemption will not come into effect until Sept. 1, two full months after the HST's July 1 start. Mr. Wilkinson said the province is considering rebating the eight per cent provincial component of the HST spent during that

two-month period.

A study commissioned by First Nations groups suggested continuing that exemption would cost the province roughly \$100-million in lost revenues. *Canwest News Service*



BEST COALITION IS 'BIG RED TENT': IGNATIEFF

Ottawa Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff says he has no interest in forging a political coalition with the New Democratic Party even if Jean Chrétien, a "master of Canadian politics," thinks it's a good idea. Mr. Ignatieff also told a news conference yesterday he wouldn't ask the former Liberal prime minister to stop talking about the idea. "Mr. Chrétien won three majority governments — you don't go around telling anybody of that distinction to cease and desist," Mr. Ignatieff said. The Liberal leader said he's convinced the "big red tent" Liberal party is already the best coalition in Canada's political centre, and the only entity that can wrest power from the Conservatives. *Canwest News Service*

TOP COURT SAYS NO TO MAKING ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT DATA A CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT



Ottawa The Supreme Court of Canada refused yesterday to elevate public access to government information to a constitutional right. In a unanimous 7-0 decision, the court said the freedom of expression protection in the Charter of Rights does not guarantee "access to all documents in government hands." The ruling overturns a decision in the Ontario Court of Appeal.

"Access to information ... can increase transparency in government," wrote Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin and Justice Rosalie Abella. "Some information in the hands of those institutions is, however, entitled to protection in order to prevent the impairment of those very principles and promote good governance." *Canwest News Service*

MUDSLIDE WARNING MISHANDLED: MINISTRY

Vancouver British Columbia's Ministry of Forests admits it didn't act "appropriately for the reality of the situation" when warned that a lake where last weekend's mudslide originated was overflowing. The mudslide on Sunday destroyed five houses south of the community of Oliver, in the Okanagan region. The RCMP received information two days before the mudslide that a hiker reported that Testalinden Lake, a man-made reservoir, was flooding and muddying the access roads. The hiker reported the flooding to a tourism centre, which passed the report on to the RCMP. Tasha Schollen, spokeswoman for the ministry, said reports of water-related issues on backcountry roads are common at this time of year. *Canwest News Service*

MEDICAL WAIT TIMES STILL TOO LONG: REPORT

Ottawa While small strides have been made in reducing wait times in five priority health-care areas over the past half-decade, those targets receive near-failing grades when extended to a broader range of specialties, an annual report card says. The Wait Time Alliance (WTA) said yesterday provincial governments must "meaningfully address" procedures

falling outside the five priority areas of diagnostic imaging, sight restoration, joint replacement, cancer radiology and cardiac care. "We have seen slow

improvement in some of these areas," said WTA co-chairman Dr. Lorne Bellan. "But the big picture is that far too many Canadians still experience long waits for needed medical care." *Canwest News Service*

