

Charges bring relief to Air India families

By John Herbert
Free Press Reporter

Rattan Kalsi thought he'd die before seeing anyone brought to justice in the death of his daughter, Indira, in 1985's Air India bombing.

Rattan and his wife, Harbhajan, joined other London and area families feeling a sense of relief and closure after learning Friday the RCMP had charged two B.C. men — Ripudaman Singh Malik and Ajaib Singh Bagri — in what was the bloodiest terrorist attack on an airplane on June 23, 1985.

Pratima Gupta of London lost her daughter, Anumita, who was 16.

"At least we're not in the dark any more, but it never will take the pain away."

Pratima Gupta

Kawant Mamak of Sarnia was left to raise three children after losing his wife, Rajinder, in the bombing.

Anumita Gupta, Indira Kalsi and Rajinder Mamak were among 329 people — 278 of them Canadian — killed when a bomb tore through Air India Flight 182 off Ireland. The Boeing 747 jet was bound for New Delhi and Bombay after stops in Toronto and Montreal.

Indira Kalsi, a pharmacy student, was very excited to be heading to India for the first time to see her grandmother, her parents recall.

"Fifteen years we have



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Rattan and Harbhajan Kalsi with pictures of their daughter, Indira, who was 21 when she died in the June 23, 1985 bombing of an Air India 747.

been waiting for this," said Rattan Kalsi, 68, a retired tool-and-die maker.

"When I heard my daughter

was on that flight . . . it just shattered my life. I was unable to work again and had a nervous breakdown.

"If it hadn't been for my wife, I would have died. We have visited Ireland so many times, it feels like home."

The Kalsi family — they have five other adult children — hasn't been alone in its grief or its troubles over the past 15 years.

Pratima Gupta would lose not only Anumita but her husband, Prabir, who died broken-hearted in 1998. Pratima and Prabir were living in nearby Melbourne when Anumita left for India on Flight 182. Last night, Pratima said their daughter's death ate away at her husband until it killed him.

Her only other child, daughter Anita, 26, studies at Kent State University near Cleveland.

"Fifteen years we have been waiting for (charges to be laid)."

Rattan Kalsi

"What I feel will never go away," Gupta said. "That took a lot out of my life, too. Both of us had to be strong after losing a child. There can be nothing worse."

"I can't express my feeling. I'm kind of numb," she said of the newly laid charges.

"At least we're not in the dark any more, but it never will take the pain away."

Kawant Mamak was left a single father to raise son Jantinder, 18, daughter Mini, 15, and son Harinderpal, 10, after losing Rajinder.

SEE RELIEF PAGE A2 ►