

Harper to apologize to Air India families at memorial

Move would pave way for financial compensation

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Prime Minister Stephen Harper will apologize to families who lost loved ones during the 1985 Air India bombing as part of a "very significant announcement" on Wednesday.

Mr. Harper is expected to express contrition for federal failings during an evening memorial service at Humber Bay Park in Toronto marking the 25th anniversary of the tragedy. An apology would lay the foundation for other amends — including compensating families and, eventually, revamping Canada's national-security apparatus.

Treasury Board Minister Stockwell Day said his boss will make "a very significant announcement" that will "definitely add a whole new dimension to the memorial this year." While officials are keeping mum on the details of Mr. Harper's speech, which comes one week after retired Supreme Court justice John Major released a scathing report on the bombing and its aftermath, Mr. Day said the Prime Minister "will make some statements ... expressing his feelings on the report and on this terrible tragedy and that will serve to highlight the ceremonies this year."

Senior officials with the RCMP and Canadian Security Intelligence Service will attend, as will Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty and Toronto Mayor David Miller. Similar memorials will be held in Ottawa and Vancouver.

In 1985, federal agents bungled the investigation into a Canadian cell of Sikh extremists who had placed bombs on board two passenger jets — bombs that exploded and killed 331 people. All but one of the perpetrators escaped justice.

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