

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO-405
ANSWERED ON- 06/02/2025

STATUS OF INVESTIGATION ON THE 1985 KANISHKA BOMBING

405 SHRI KARTIKEYA SHARMA

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :-

- a) the current status of India's engagement with the Canadian Government and other partners, regarding the investigation and prosecution of those responsible for the 1985 Kanishka bombing and the details thereof;
- b) the details of the steps being taken by the Ministry to ensure that all perpetrators of the bombing are extradited to India; and
- c) whether there is any mechanism in place to ensure that the Canadian Government is held accountable for any perceived lapses in their investigation or prosecution of the perpetrators, if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
(SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH)

(a to c) The AI-182 'Kanishka' bombing in 1985 was planned and executed in Canada. The dastardly attack claimed the lives of 329 innocent people (largely of India-origin), including 24 Indian nationals.

In May 2006, the Government of Canada appointed a Commission of Inquiry to examine (a) the events surrounding the bombing, (b) the subsequent investigation carried out by the relevant agencies, and (c) to identify gaps in Canada's security and intelligence system.

On 16 June 2010, nearly 25 years after the bombing, the Government of Canada received the final report of the Commission of Inquiry titled, '**Air India Flight 182: A Canadian Tragedy**' which was a damning indictment of actions taken before and after the tragedy. The Commission identified numerous mistakes that were committed around the time of the bombing, including as regards the treatment of the victims' families.

Some of the findings of the Commission, inter alia are:

- Canadian Government agencies were in possession of significant pieces of information that taken together would have led to the conclusion that Flight AI-182 was at high risk of being bombed by known pro-Khalistani terrorists in June 1985.
- Canadian Government agencies failed to appreciate the nature and seriousness of the threat of pro-Khalistani extremism.
- Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) surveillance was ineffective.
- Despite the knowledge of the threat of sabotage, Transport Canada and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Protective Policing displayed a lack of flexibility by continuing to rely on anti-hijacking security measures, which did not address the threat of bombing.
- There was a lack of cooperation and communication within the RCMP and between RCMP, Transport Canada and the airlines in relation to airport security.

The only person ever convicted in this case was Mr. Inderjit Singh Reyat. He was released from a Canadian prison in 2016 after serving a 20-year sentence. The other co-conspirators in this cowardly act have either died or have largely remain unpunished for a lack of evidence.

On 23rd June 2010, at the 25th anniversary commemorative ceremony for the victims of the tragedy, the then Prime Minister of Canada apologized on behalf of the Government of Canada and all Canadians for the institutional failings twenty-five years earlier and the treatment of the victims' families thereafter.

Every year on 23rd June, the High Commission of India in Ottawa and the Consulates General of India in Toronto and Vancouver, together with family members of the victims and members of the Indian Diaspora participate in solemnly remembering the victims of this dastardly act of terror, in Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver.

Despite the lessons learnt from this dastardly terrorist act, space has been provided by the Canadian government for violent extremists and secessionists to continue their activities in the name of Charter Freedoms. Last year, we have seen that radical elements were for the very first time allowed by the Canadian government to hold protests at all places where our High Commission and Consulates were organizing commemorative activities in honour of the victims of the attack. Such incidents continue to undermine the confidence in the Canadian legal and justice system and also impacts the India-Canada bilateral relations.

We have constantly reiterated that any act of glorifying terrorism, including the bombing of AI-182 'Kanishka' in 1985, is deplorable and should be condemned by all peace-loving countries and people. It is unfortunate that even today the Canadian authorities allow pro-Khalistan groups to glorify the bombing of AI-182 through banners and posters that are displayed during festive occasions.

Government of India's long-standing position on appropriate action against the perpetrators of this ghastly tragedy, in order to bring justice to the victims, is well known.

On 1st July 2024, the Rajya Sabha observed a minute's silence for the victims of AI-182. Hon'ble Vice President on the occasion stated that: "Regrettably justice was never fully served in these cases. These incidents are a grim reminder of why the world must show zero tolerance towards terrorism and violent extremism. Such acts can never be condoned or justified or countenanced under any pretext."
