

# DOWN TO EARTH

## Condition of Women Industrial Workers in City-II

By A S M Nurunnabi

**LAND HOLDING:** That deprivation drives women to join the urban labour is clear from the fact that the majority of the female workers come from landless and land-poor families. The appreciably higher proportion of women coming from land — poor and land-less families seems to be related to the pressures created by increasing landlessness and shrinking of the traditional agro-based income opportunities in the rural area.

**FAMILY INCOME:** That urgent survival need of the family has compelled women to join paid work is more clearly seen when family income of workers is considered along with the land holding pattern. A majority of women workers (68 per cent) belong to families whose monthly income falls between Tk 1000 to Tk 3000.

**WORKING HOURS:** In garment factories where women form the majority of the work force, daily overtime of 3-4 hours is customary. To meet deadlines, workers reported clocking over six hours overtime.

**BENEFITS:** In the government managed units and other large establishments, the official holiday list is generally followed. Garment factories, however, are often defaulters in this respect, enforcing work on weekly holidays to meet big orders. Where other facilities are concerned, women in comparison with men seem to be deprived more of their legal entitlements, e.g. maternity leave with pay, which the government managed establishments seem to follow. The private establishments, especially the smaller ones, such as gar-

ments, rice mills, construction seem frequently to disregard it.

None of the establishments, not even the government managed ones have creches, which are stipulated under the existing labour laws. The absence of creches give rise to problems related to the safety and health of babies of working mothers.

**AWARENESS:** The workers are conscious about their poor working conditions. There is sometimes deep resentment about irregularity in payment for overtime, especially in garment factories where overtime is a regular feature of the production process.

Even in the large textile and jute mills managed by government, the lack of physical amenities regarding toilet facilities, ventilation, and light and anxiety about babies left under the dubious care of elder children, neighbours and very young child-minders leads to psychological tensions among women workers. The most significant factor of unhappiness contributing to unhappiness and resentment, however, is their job insecurity which plagues private establishments, including rice mills, construction, garments, hosieries.

By and large, the women workers seldom articulate their grievances particularly in front of their superiors. Partly the reason is that they are socialised to be patient in the face of adversity and to suffer inconvenience in silence. Partly they are afraid of losing their jobs.

**Women Customers in Kutch Bazaars**  
Till the advent of independence, it was mostly a male

domain to make purchases in kutch or vegetable markets. Nowadays that burden seems to have shifted to female shoulders in many cases. The number of women shoppers in city's kutch bazaars has been steadily increasing. In social standing, they range from the middle class to high-level ones travelling in cars. They engage in such activities either from sheer necessities of family life or just as mere hobbies as in the case of high-income groups.

The kutch bazaars where women can go conveniently are few and far between in the city, such as New Market, Kawran Bazar, Gulshan markets Nos 1 and 2. The way population is increasing in the city with growing intensification of their activities, the problems faced by women who go for outside activities are also growing. In the past, it was estimated that 90 per cent males used to make such shopping. Nowadays, the figure seems to have come down to 30 per cent.

The main difficulty that bothers women shoppers is overcrowding where women shoppers jostle with men. To give relief in such situations, the strong feminists advocate establishment of separate kutch bazaars for women in suitable locations. A more practical and easy solution seems to be to set apart an area in each kutch bazar exclusively for women where various items of family necessities including kitchen items will be on sale for women customers during certain fixed hours of the day. In such situations, the overcrowding may be more bearable for women shoppers.



Foreign Minister of Pakistan Assef Ali (R) shakes hands with Hamid Al Gabidi, Secretary General of the Organisation of the Islamic Countries (OIC) after winding up a three-day emergency session in Islamabad yesterday. —AFP photo

## OIC for referendum

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also rejected as 'absolutely unacceptable' the easing of existing sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro.

Winding up a three-day emergency session here, the conference called on the five-nation contact group, comprising Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the United States, to refrain from 'entertaining such suggestions.'

Terminating it a tactical move on behalf of Serbia, a resolution adopted by the conference said lifting sanctions would be 'dangerous, unbalanced and absolutely unacceptable.'

The conference also called on all member states to sever economic and commercial ties with Serbia and Montenegro and reiterated its demand for lifting the arms embargo against Bosnia.

It said the 'Bosnian government must be provided with all means for self-defence,' and asked Islamic states to individually or collectively provide such means if the Security Council did not lift the arms embargo for Bosnians.

The special session was convened here at the request of Pakistan to work out consensus positions on issues concerning the Muslim world ahead of the upcoming United Nations General Assembly session.

A final communique, adopted by consensus, demanded 'free access' for the International Committee of the Red Cross to all detention camps in Serbia and Montenegro.

## Wijetunga won't run for presidency

COLOMBO, Sept 9: President Dingiri Banda Wijetunga has decided against contesting the presidential election in November as the United National Party's candidate, party officials announced Friday, reports AP.

Gamini Dissanayake, the opposition leader in parliament, will run for the presidency for the UNP, officials said.

Wijetunga will, however, remain in office until a new president assumes office in January next year.

The president did not give any reason for his decision to drop out of the presidential race. Wijetunga recently was hospitalised with chest pains, opening a convenient avenue for a graceful retirement.

## Arafat, Peres to attend peace concert in Oslo

OSLO, Sept 9: Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) chairman Yasser Arafat will attend a peace concert in Oslo Tuesday, the Norwegian Foreign Ministry confirmed today, reports AFP.

The two leaders will attend the 'Shalom-Salaam' concert, hosted by the city of Oslo and the UNESCO, on the first anniversary of the signing of the declaration of principles on September 13.

Peres and Arafat are expected to hold bilateral talks, in addition to talks with Norwegian Foreign Minister Bjørn Tore Godal, according to foreign ministry spokesman Ingvar Havnen.

## British MPs laud BRAC activities

The visiting six-member British parliamentary delegation led by Conservative Party MP Michael Colvin had a meeting in Dhaka yesterday with the BRAC, reports UNB.

During the two-hour luncheon meeting hosted by British High Commissioner Peter Fowler the British parliamentarians had detailed discussion with the BRAC on its origin, growth and its present activities.

Faruk Ahmed Chowdhury, Adviser, BRAC, explained in details various aspects of the BRAC's activities in rural credit and development, non-formal primary education and women's health and education.

The members of the delegation observed, they were deeply impressed with the involvement of the BRAC in ameliorating the lot of the poor people of rural Bangladesh.

The leader of the delegation Michael Colvin described the BRAC as the co-partner in development. Lauding the non-formal primary education programme of the BRAC Viscount Waverley, a member of the House of Lords, said the BRAC was not only working for the poor but for the next generation as well.

## Cairo confce

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on abortion finally in hand, delegates today moved on to other contentious issues, including contraception and teen-age sex.

UN officials said the full committee that began considering the abortion text today would extend its deliberations to Saturday. The text would go to the whole conference on Monday.

Countries participating in the conference are trying to come up with a blueprint to control population growth. Currently the world population is growing by a record 90 million people a year.

The draft sets a target of spending \$17 billion a year worldwide by 2000 for basic health care for women and children, family planning and AIDS prevention. That's projected to rise to nearly \$22 billion a year by 2015.

While abortion so far has dominated the nine-day conference, which began Monday, delegates this morning debated the chapter on education, which calls for the eradication of illiteracy and equal education for girls and boys.

The conference will also discuss contraception, adolescent sex and the concept of 'fertility regulation' — a phrase the Vatican views as a code word for abortion.

Delegates discussed today whether immigrants have the 'right' to be united with their families. Some nations with many emigrants say they should, but countries on the receiving end say this would undermine efforts to control immigration.



Sayedabad bus terminal in the city during yesterday's transport strike. —Star photo

## British MPs on impasse

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tion commission with adequate powers to hold elections without any interference from the executive wing of a state. Andrew also attached importance to providing adequate logistics to the election commission for conducting polls independently.

Opposing 'excessive use of money' in elections, the visiting MPs suggested limiting the poll campaign period to two or three weeks. They also underlined the role of local governments in ensuring transparency in the election process.

About the negotiations between the country's opposing political camps, the British parliamentarians said 'We have met leaders of both the sides and discussed the contentious issue, but it seems to us that there has so far been no real dialogue between them.'

'The BNP would go ahead with its proposed electoral process reforms bill, but the impression we got from our meeting with ruling party leader and Deputy Leader of the House was that it was not going to move fast', he said.

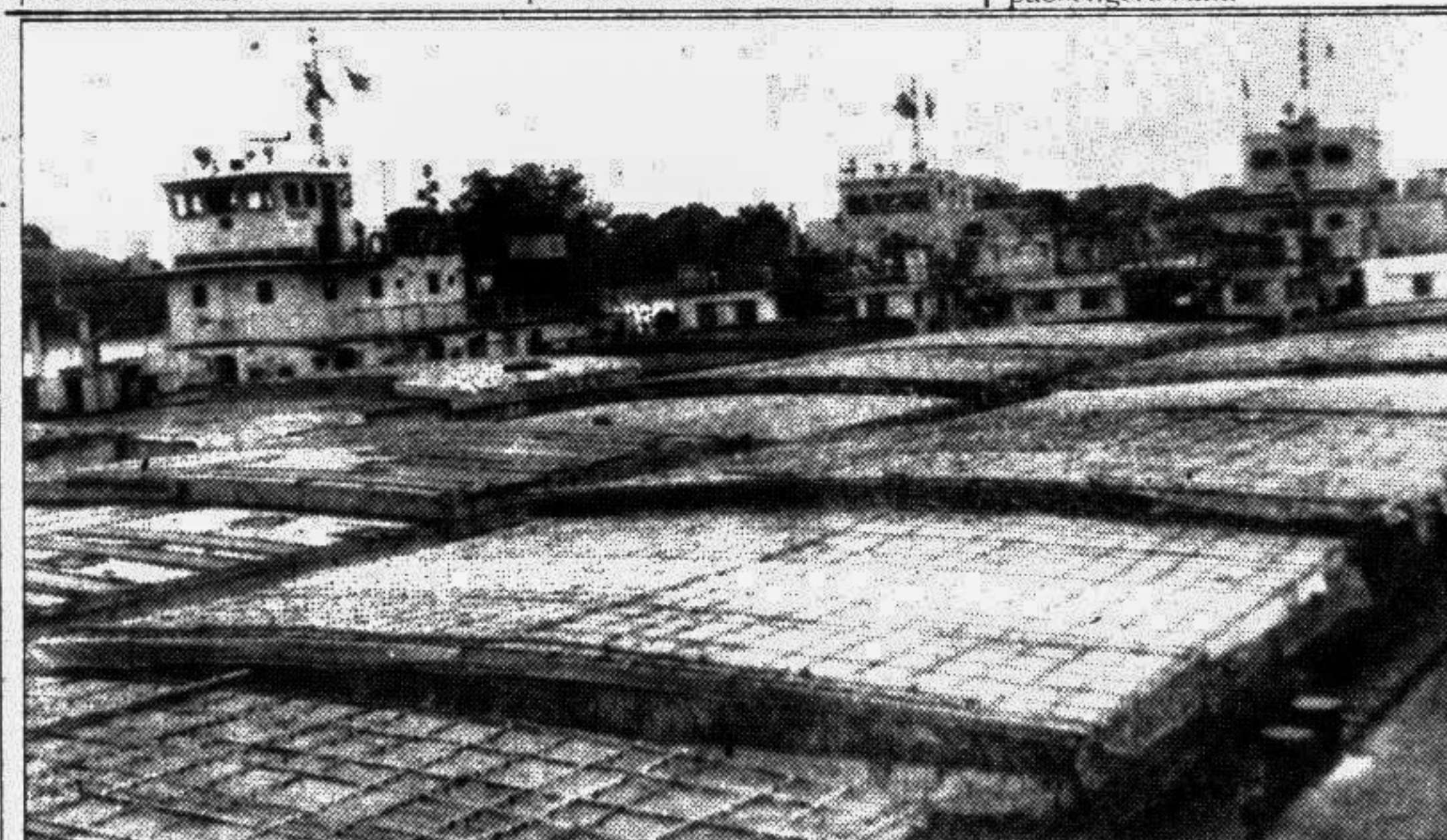
## Sanjay Dutt denied bail

NEW DELHI, Sept 9: Hindi movie hero Sanjay Dutt was denied bail by India's Supreme Court Friday, upholding his detention under a tough anti-terrorism law in connection with the serial bombing of Bombay last year, reports AP.

Dutt, who has starred in dozens of popular action movies, was jailed July 4 on charges of illegally possessing an AK-56 assault rifle. Prosecutors linked him to the explosion of 13 bombs in office buildings, hotels and the Bombay Stock Exchange in March 1993 that killed more than 300 people.

Dutt was charged under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act, or TADA, which international critics have called a draconian law that suspends the civil rights of the accused.

The Supreme Court said that under TADA it was up to the defence to prove that the possession of weapons was unrelated to the bombing. Dutt had appealed a decision denying him bail by the Bombay court that is trying 192 suspects in the case.



The Indian cargo vessels impounded by the authorities seen at Narayanjanj terminal yesterday. —Star photo

## 4 impounded Indian vessels seek clearance

By Staff Correspondent

Four Indian cargo vessels impounded by the authorities for not having necessary papers for entering Bangladesh are now anchored at the Narayanjanj terminal.

The vessels were not allowed to leave the terminal or unload cargo till yesterday.

The vessels entered Bangladesh through the Zakiganj border with paper and spices from Karimganj port of India. Two vessels, BB Kaveri and BB Satadru, with about 1230 tons of paper for the Bangladesh Textbook Board arrived at Narayanjanj August 29. Two more vessels — BB Shilal and BB Vima — arrived

## Transport strike

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unauthorised shops from the terminal.

It will go on an indefinite strike on September 15 if the demands are not met, said its acting chairman GM Seraj, MP.

DRTA General Secretary Khondkar Enaytullah told UNB that they had called the strike to press for realisation of a 9-point demand that includes stoppage of police harassment and establishment of a city terminal and a special coach terminal.

The association also demands payment for the requisition of vehicles by police within 15 days, exemption of interest for defaulters in transport sector and release of seized vehicles within 48 hours according to Motor Vehicle Test (MVT) rule.

Some 5,000 vehicles and 53 routes from Mohakhali, Fulbaria, Sayedabad and Gulistan bus terminals were controlled by the association, Khondkar claimed.

Asked about the opposition's Dhaka siege programme, he said it had no link with the transport strike. 'Ours is a non-political organisation and we have supporters from all parties,' he added.

President of Bangladesh Jatiya Sarak Paribahan Samikha Federation Shah Mohammad Abu Zafar in a statement described the transport strike as a conspiracy to foil the 'Dhaka siege.'

Another report says, over two dozens of private cars and auto-rickshaws were damaged by two rival groups of transport workers near Syedabad bus terminal yesterday, witnesses said.

They chased each other and hurled stones at parked and passing vehicles in front of the bus terminal creating panic in the area. There was also report of clashes between rival groups at Gabtali bus terminal.

No bus left or arrived at any of the three inter-district bus terminals in the city due to an indefinite strike enforced by the owners association from Thursday evening to protest police harassment.

Buses and minibuses except for several double decker BRTC buses were off the city streets responding to the strike call.

But some buses from southern districts plied up to the other end of the Buriganga Bridge and buses from North Bengal came up to Amin Bazar, passengers said.



The Indian cargo vessels impounded by the authorities seen at Narayanjanj terminal yesterday. —Star photo

## Serbs expel 600 more Muslims

SARAJEVO, Sept 9: Bosnian Serbs have expelled up to 600 Muslims from the northeastern Bijeljina region, the ICRC said today, even as Serb leader Radovan Karadzic told a senior UN official he had ordered a halt to the practice, reports AP.

Lisa Jones, spokeswoman of the International Committee of the Red Cross, said between 500 and 600 Muslims were expelled in two groups from the Bijeljina area Thursday evening.

The group had to walk approximately eight kilometres (five miles) across the confrontation line at Djokici on the Bosnian government side and Banja-Brdo on the Serb-held side, she said.

# The Midnight File

## US, Cuba reach accord on refugees

NEW ORLEANS (Louisiana), Sept 9: The United States and Cuba reached an agreement today aimed at stemming the exodus of Cuban refugees at sea, the White House said. The agreement was reached during discussions in New York between Cuban and US negotiators, said officials travelling with President Bill Clinton. The accord calls for the legal immigration of at least 20,000 Cubans into the United States each year, reports APF.

## Stolen uranium seized in Russia

MOSCOW, Sept 9: Police have seized 100 kilograms (220 pounds) of uranium-238 apparently stolen from a plant in a central Russian city, news reports said Friday. It was the second seizure of stolen industrial-grade uranium in less than a month, coming amid heightened Western concerns over the safety of nuclear materials in Russia, reports AP.

## Lankan troops kill 37 Tamil rebels

COLOMBO, Sept 9: Several days after the government and Tamil guerrillas proposed peace talks, the army killed up to 37 rebels in their worst defeat this year, the military said Friday, reports AP.

The soldiers ambushed the insurgents as they passed through a dense forest near an army base in northern Sri Lanka on Thursday night, said a military spokesman, Brig Gemunu Kulatunga.

'Soldiers reported seeing up to 35 bodies of rebels after the battle in which two soldiers were killed and five wounded,' Kulatunga said in Colombo. The fighting occurred in Pooneryn, 280 kilometers (160 miles) north of the capital.

Although some military commanders reportedly oppose the proposed peace talks, the ambush did not appear to have been planned to try to prevent them. In predominantly rebel-held northern Sri Lanka, soldiers often hide near their scattered military camps to ambush guerrillas as they pass by.

Two other rebels were killed Thursday in an ambush by troops at Welioya, 230 kilometres (145 miles) north-east of Colombo.

The trains are: Upakul in between Dhaka-Noakhali, Egara Sindhu in between Dhaka-Kishoreganj and Joyantika in between Dhaka-Sylhet. The trains will run according to their schedule time table, the sources said.

## Hartal tomorrow

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itself disrupted the normal life in the city and arrested and tortured opposition leaders and workers in different parts of the capital.

The AL meeting alleged that the government had deliberately severed the rail, road and launch links with the capital while BNP terrorists have created a reign of terror with the intention to foil the 'Dhaka Siege' programme.

'Being afraid of the current mass movement, the government has chosen the path of torture and confrontation.'

The Awami League blamed the government for, what it said, 'pushing the country to an inevitable conflict and being engaged in a deep rooted conspiracy to disrupt democracy.'

The AL would also organise a rally on Sunday after the hartal, it added.

A separate press statement, issued after a meeting of the Jatiya Party presidium with Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury in the chair, urged the city dwellers to observe the hartal on Sunday.

A Jamaat press release issued by the party secretary general, Matur Rahman Nizami, alleged that the government had stripped the people of their democratic right to hold rallies and processions.

## US plane crash

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gaged and airplane parts strewn everywhere.

'It was total devastation,' said Jim Bothwell, director of operations for the STAT MedEvac helicopter service. 'The airplane was in a million pieces and the people inside were in pieces.'

Firemen fought their way to the scene through trees and down treacherous terrain, but there was no road to transport heavy vehicles.

As dusk fell and it became clear there were no survivors, emergency coordinators imported four-wheel drives, dune buggies and chainsaws to patch together a makeshift road so federal investigators could bring in sophisticated equipment Friday.

The search was called off about two hours after the crash, and the area was sealed off for the night. The air space above the crash site was restricted to emergency aircraft.

Witnesses said the plane rolled over once or twice and headed nose-down into the ravine.

'I looked up and there it was,' said Tom Michel, who was at a gas station near the crash site. 'It was just coming straight down. I was screaming for everybody to run. It looked like it was under full power and he just went straight in.'