

## A NOTE ON A LARGE BEEHIVE INSIDE A COLLEGE BUILDING AT HILI, DAKSHIN DINAJPUR, WEST BENGAL

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A large, exposed beehive of the Giant Rock Bee, *Apis dorsata*, was observed between January and February, 2025 on the building of S.B.S. Government College at Hili, Dakshin Dinajpur, West Bengal (25.2846127°N; 88.9911632°E). The hive was suspended from the underside of a concrete balcony overhang on the exterior of the second floor. The structure consisted of a single, conical-shaped wax comb, entirely covered by a dense, multi-layered curtain of worker bees. The hive measured approximately 1.64 feet in length (horizontal span) and 1.25 feet in width (vertical depth). The comb appeared a golden-brown colour, filled with hexagonal cells used for housing brood and storing honey and pollen. The individual bees were tightly clustered together, completely covering the comb and indicating a significant bee population. This thick curtain of bees functions as a living protective barrier, shielding the vulnerable brood and honey stores inside the comb from the predators.



Figs. 1-3. Beehive views in the College building of Hili, Dakshin Dinajpur, West Bengal

This type of open-air natural nesting (see note below) is characteristic of the giant honey bee (*Apis dorsata*), a species native to South and Southeast Asia, including India. Such combs can reach up to a meter in length and are often found on tall tree branches, cliff faces, or urban buildings (Nandi and Mahabal, 1974). Finding such a large nest on a man-made structure, specifically a student-dominated college building, is uncommon, which is the reason for this communication. The giant rock bees usually seek out suitable, high-up surfaces for safety and protection from ground predators. Apparently, these giant rock bees constructed a nest in this crowded college building, ignoring human interference, likely due to adjacent agricultural fields, including mustard cultivation. However, because bees are important pollinators and a major source of wild honey for local economies, they were tolerated on this college campus.

NOTE: "Beehive" refers to a man-made structure for honey harvesting purpose, while "bee nest" denotes a natural habitat (WS1). These terms are often used interchangeably in common parlance to describe colonies found in trees or on rocks.

## REFERENCES

Nandi, N. C. and Mahabal, A. S. 1974. Nesting behaviour of *Apis dorsata* (Hymenoptera: Apidae) in relation to local wind directions around Poona. *Indian Bee J.*, **36**: 19-20.

WS1.<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beehive#:~:text=A%20beehive%20is%20an%20enclosed,house%20a%20honey%20bee%20colony>.