

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>.