

Dr Sen of the
Wildlife Rescue Unit
with the dolphin.

Rescued dolphin is still restless

DE 28.12.2012 1 & 2

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Research Institute Director, Prof. Dr Saleem Mustafa, said the stranded spinner dolphin (*Stenella longirostris*) which it received from the Wildlife Department on Wednesday showed behavioural signs of stress.

It is an adult of at least seven years, has a narrow body and a long beak, measures more than two meters and weighs around 70kg.

"Obviously, the dolphin is not in good condition and is restless. This is understandable under such condition despite the best possible efforts.

"Spinner dolphins are known to rest during daylight hours," he told *Daily Express*, Thursday. He said it displayed a bit of restlessness for the ordeal of stranding it has undergone.

"There could possibly be other problems which we cannot diagnose by external observations," he said. "There could be internal injuries that we are not sure of."

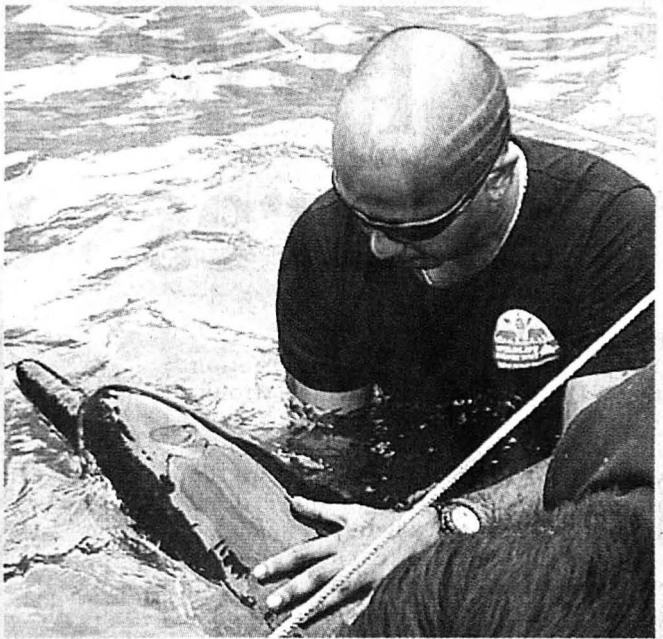
"There were no visible (or external) signs of extreme dehydration - no extreme dryness of skin or skin peeling and cracking."

He said his staff joined the efforts of other government agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in rescuing the animal at Sulaman on Wednesday.

"Spinner dolphins primarily consume food at night. Their food comprises fish and squids. They rest during daylight hours.

"I could not see it sleeping. Dolphins do not sleep like humans. They will drown and die of suffocation if they sleep like us. They remain conscious. A healthy dolphin rests by floating at the surface, with one eye open.

After some time, it closes this eye and



opens the other one. I have not seen this alternative eye opening and closing activity. Obviously, the dolphin is not in a good condition and is restless," he said.

It was not known if the dolphin belonged to the resident population in Sabah or had migrated from another area. Saleem said when the dolphin was first transferred here, it seemed disoriented, but within half an hour, it showed signs of improvement.

"It was in better condition as I saw it swimming all over the place." On why it showed signs of improvement, but was restless the next day, he said that the hatchery tank with good quality re-circulating water, protected from intense radiation must have provided a relaxing environment.

Another reason was the fact that the dolphin was given medication by the Wildlife Rescue unit staff which might have helped.

"However, medication has time-bound effect and the dolphin probably required sustained treatment for improving its condition." Ups and downs in the condition are expected under such situation.

"This is why I cannot say the dolphin is out of danger. Efforts are being made to stabilise its condition and improve it." It would be kept for a few weeks and if there are any signs of infection, it would be quarantined.

He said no quick answer could be provided for questions related to the cause of beaching.

"There are many possibilities, including eating on prey organisms contaminated by toxins, extreme exhaustion, sickness due to infection, disorientation and injuries.

See Page 2, Col. 3

Dolphin will be returned to the sea

DE 28.12.2012 1 2 2

From Page One

He said that with the help of those who volunteered for rescue, the dolphin was kept wet and cool by splashing water on the skin because it stranded during bright day time when the sun was strong. We

ensured that water splashing did not cover the blowhole.

“We avoided pushing the beached animal back to the sea because of the risk that if the dolphin was sick it could beach elsewhere in a remote location and might die,”

he said.

“The dolphin will be returned to the sea if it gets strong enough to fend for itself in the wild.

I do not think the dolphin is out of danger.

We do not know if it will survive despite our best possible efforts.