Digging Out the Past

Still in its infancy, archaeological research requires more patronisation if we went to learn about our roots

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"Archaeology gives authenticity to history," says Mutasim Billah Nasir, a student of the 39th batch of the department of archaeology, Jahangirnagar University (JU), while [illegible] his reason to choose this subject of [illegible]ding to history books human set-[illegible]'s rich and fertile delta [illegible] pre-historic times [illegible] discovery of pre-[illegible] in the Chittagong [illegible]almai, Wari-[illegible]nunj and [illegible]re these [illegible]ve, what [illegible]ilisations [illegible]s land — are questions archaeology can answer by revealing our past.

The practice of archaeology in Bangladesh began during the British period. Starting off as the Archaeological Survey of India in 1861, the present Archaeological Department under the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Bangladesh, has been exploring, conserving and displaying archaeological sites in the country. At present the department looks after 448 heritage sites all over the country out of which two — Historic Mosque city of Bagerhat in Bagerhat district and ruins of the Buddhist vihara at Paharpur in Naogaon district— have been recognised as World Cultural Heritage Sites. History of the sites and the relics discovered are being displayed in about 16 museums run by the department.

The four regional offices and the head office of the department in Dhaka are responsible for the maintenance of the sites and museums under the respective divisions. "There is a yearly budget for excavation which is done on priority basis. This year (2012-2013) we did excavation in Jagaddal Bihara, Naogaon,



Idols found at the Buddhist Bihar at Bikrampur. *(below)*
Students participating in the excavation of the bihar, discovered near ancient Buddhist scholar Atis Dipankar's ancestral home in Bikrampur.
PHOTOS: PALASH KHAN

