written on their faces — the name of the brick manufacturer in English. Is that conservation?" he asks.

Rakhi Roy admits that there have been some mistakes in conservations by the Department of Archaeology in the past due to lack of capacity. However, the Department is trying to recover these mistakes now. Under the circumstances, Sufi has decided to seek status of protected monuments for some of the sites excavated by Oitihya Onneswan in Wari-Bateshwar and Bikrampur, only after proper conservation. Founded in 2006, Oitihya Onneswan, an archaeological research centre, has made important contributions to archaeological research through its work in Wari-Bateswar and Bikrampur.



Associate professor of archaeology, Swadhin Sen has recently discovered Pala dynasty structures at Ghoraghat, Dinajpur. PHOTOS: STAR FILE

Carrying out archaeological research at individual or private level becomes difficult because of the lack of funds required to execute excavation and conservation activities. Though many people helped Sufi individually in his archaeological research at Wari-Bateshwar, getting financial support from government has also not been easy initially. Besides financial support, community cooperation also becomes crucial in archaeological research and heritage management. Oitihya Onneswan has been successful in employing this concept of public archaeology in Wari-Bateswar and Bikrampur where they excavated mostly on private-property. Though landowners are sometimes compensated on a yearly basis for the use of the land, creating awareness among them about the importance of the work is more effective in the long-run. This is done by establishing open air museums and conducting guided tours for locals and visitors in the excavation area.

To Dr Shahnaj Husne Jahan, who teaches archaeology as part of the General Education course in the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB), financial constraint is however not a big issue. She feels that genuine interest of the researcher is more important in archaeological research. Jahan and her students from ULAB have carried out excavation in the country's largest ancient fortified city at Bhitargarh, Panchagarh district. Referring to student's interest about this subject she says that every semester a lot of students register for the archaeology courses offered by ULAB.

In spite of the interest noticeable among students regarding this subject, Jahangirnagar University (JU) still remains the only academic institution offering higher education in this area. The department of archaeology started its journey with a donation from Ford Foundation in 1985, offering Masters and later in 1992 becoming a full-fledged department under the Faculty of Arts. "Although archaeology falls under the faculty of Arts, this department requires funds like that of a scientific department," says Professor Mozammel Hoque, faculty member department of archaeology, JU, referring to the research-based and lab-oriented nature of teaching this subject. In fact, Dr Sufi complains that the department does not provide enough financial support for archaeological survey and excavation. Field work is compulsory in the 2nd, 4th and 5th year but is limited to exploration or archaeological survey. With its limited funds the university has not been able to engage students in excavation. However, JU students get the opportunity to participate in excavation when their teachers work in research or doctoral projects as that of Wari-Bateswar, Bikrampur and Dinajpur's Ghoraghat.

Archaeological practice has a long way to go in Bangladesh. However opportunities are opening up in different areas. When Mutasim Billah Nasir opted to study this subject, he received strong opposition from his family since there was no promising job in this area. The Department of Archaeology has only recently started recruiting people with archaeological background. Even now most of the museums in the country employ people with history and Islamic history background. Yet Nasir is hopeful. He says: "The study of archaeology helps one become aware of one's surroundings and become a good observer. It helps me to learn more about my past, my identity."