

Excavation by ASI

2433. SHRI TIRUCHI SIVA: Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has carried out any excavation projects in the country in the last five years and in current year;

(b) if so, the State-wise details of the same along with locations and findings, particularly in the State of Tamil Nadu; and

(c) the details of the allocated and utilized funds in this respect?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE (DR. MAHESH SHARMA): (a) and (b) The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has conducted several excavations in the country during the last five years and the current year including the sites in Tamil Nadu. The details are given in Statement (*See* below).

(c) The details of fund allotted/utilized for this purpose during the five years and current year are as under:

| (₹ in lac) | | |
|------------|----------------|-------------|
| Year | Funds allotted | Expenditure |
| 2011-2012 | 256.00 | 255.00 |
| 2012-2013 | 300.00 | 275.17 |
| 2013-2014 | 305.00 | 301.05 |
| 2014-2015 | 405.00 | 400.11 |
| 2015-2016 | 500.50 | 500.42 |
| 2016-2017 | 555.00 | 152.07 |

Statement

Details of excavation carried out by the Archaeological Survey of India during the last five years and current year

Some of the sites excavated by Archaeological Survey of India which have yielded important finds are mentioned below:—

1. **Kurugodu (Budhikolla), District Bellary, Karnataka: 2011-12**

Recent excavation has brought to light Palaeolithic (old stone age) tool made out of quartz and a number of debitage of microliths along with fluted cores. A

number of finished and unfinished Neolithic tools were also found. The site was occupied right from the prehistoric period to early historical period.

Antiquities recovered were Polished Stone Axes of greenish basalt, dolerite in different stages of manufacture. Hammer stones, stone rubbers or balls, pestles, oval stone discs, Finished and Chalcolithic blades in Chert, jasper and chalcedony.

2. Excavation at Malhar, District Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh: 2011-12

The excavation revealed an urban settlement and goods of daily need of the contemporary society. The ceramic assemblage comprised of red ware, black and red ware, black slip and stamped pottery. Important antiquities from the site consist of iron objects, stone objects, lead objects, ear studs, dices, antimony rod, kohl sticks, coins and inscribed sealings.

This early historic site has yielded rich collections from Kushan levels. A hoard of 246 copper coins was found from the Kushan level. The preliminary chemical cleaning of these coins shows majority of them being illegible due to constant usage. However those which are a little legible show the coins variety of Kanishka-I and Huvishka.

The second find is that of Elephant teeth (molar) in charred condition along with fragments of rib bones and vertebra. The other finds are terracotta figurines, copper and lead coins, Iron objects, terracotta sealings, beads of semi-precious stones. A couple of circular stone structures and a small well made of stone slabs are other significant finds which are found for the first time at Malhar.

3. Excavation at Khirsara, District Nakhatrana, Gujarat: 2011 -12, 2012-13

The Harappan mound at Khirsara, locally known as 'Gadhwal Vadi' was excavated and has yielded rich cultural deposit belonging to the mature Harappan phase. The Harappans developed a well-planned fortified settlement at Khirsara which is roughly rectangular in shape. The evidence shows five structural phases and damage caused by the flood in successive phases. The excavation also revealed that the citadel was raised over the bed rock within the general fortification. The site has also yielded almost all types of Harappan artefacts which include nine seals of various types and shapes.

4. Bangarh, District South Dinajpur, West Bengal: 2011-12

The ancient mound at Bangarh is located on the left bank of Punarbaba River, a tributary of the Ganga in the South Dinajpur District of West Bengal. The limited

excavations carried out at this site brought to light the remains of a massive brick wall with a width of 1.6 m built of various sizes of bricks (14 x 14 x 4.5 cm, 15 x 15 x 5 cm). The other finds include terracotta tiles, iron nails, terracotta plaques and stone beads. The findings can be dated to the medieval period. The pottery remains are represented by glazed and red ware.

5. **Excavation at Itkhori, District Chatra, Jharkhand: 2011-12, 2012-13**

The archaeological site of Itkhori is situated in Distt. Chatra of Jharkhand. It is about 150km. toward north from Ranchi. During the course of excavation the ruins of stupa remains were unearthed. Among the artefacts stone blocks carved with Kirthimukha, purna kumbha, kalasha, mythical figurine, chaitya motives, votive stupas, Buddha idol in sand stone, panels, Buddha head in terracotta, hopscotch, beads, gamesman and number of semi-precious stone beads are the noteworthy antiquities of Itkhori excavation. The unearthed pottery and potsherds are mainly dull red ware, red slipped ware and a few are micaceous red ware. These are medium to coarse varieties which are well oxidized and other mostly ill oxidized. In shapes mainly are bowls, knife-edge bowls, lids, vases, jars, handi, spout pots, earthen lamps, incense burner etc.

6. **Excavation at Rupnagar, District Rupnagar, Punjab: 2011-12**

The excavation brought to the light a five-fold cultural sequence i.e. (i) Harappan/Bara; (ii) Painted Grey Ware; (iii) Sunga/Kushan/Gupta; (iv) Post Gupta and (v) Medieval Periods. The prominent finds are bara ware, black on red ware painted grey ware, red ware glazed ware and beads, blades, bangles, bone points, seals figurines (animal and human), coins, copper and iron objects of various cultural periods.

7. **Raja Vishal Ka Garh, Vaishali, District Vaishali, Bihar: 2011-12**

Remnants of brick fortification wall, human and animal figurines, wheels, beads, skin rubber, sealings, Hopscotch of terracotta, beads of semi-precious stone, bone implements copper antimony rods, copper coins etc. NBPW, black slipped ware, Red Ware, construction of mud rampart and fortification wall in different phases were found. Findings of terracotta objects, skin rubbers, human figurines, pendants etc. are most noteworthy. Mention may be made of gold objects iron objects, copper antimony rods etc. Pot Sherds include NBPW, Grey Ware, Black Slipped Ware, Red Ware. Period of remaining is 3rd century BC to 6th-7th Century A.D.

8. **Sisupalgarh, District Khurdha, Odisha: 2011-12**

The excavation has revealed the fortification which was originally of mud and subsequently retained by laterite block and in the last phase was superimposed by bricks. This may be datable from 2nd century B.C to 3rd century A.D. Among the important findings, terracotta ear ornaments, balls, hopscotch, two sealings and iron implements are noteworthy. Among the pottery important findings are red polished ware, dull red ware, buff ware, grey ware and black and red ware all datable between 1st century B.C to century 350 A.D.

9. **Karanpura, District Hanumangarh, Rajasthan: 2012-13**

The excavation at Karanpura, District Hanumangarh, Rajasthan, has produced early and mature Harappan pottery and house complexes built of mud bricks of both the early and mature Harappan period. The other important artefacts consist of copper arrow heads, mirror, bangle, rings and fish hooks. Beads made of steatite and semi-precious stone of agate, faience, carnelian and terracotta and spindle whorls were also found excavated. Besides a large quantity of animal bone fragments and a few varieties of grains were also unearthed.

10. **Tola Salargarh at Piprahwa and Tola Ganwaria, District Siddharthnagar, Uttar Pradesh: 2012-13**

The ancient mounds at the site have been excavated in the past and were re-excavated to find out inter-connection of different sites, believed to be parts of ancient Kapilavastu. Another objective was to get the samples collected for radiocarbon dates to know the antiquity of the site. During excavation terracotta human and animal figurines, semi-precious stone beads, copper coins, bone points and terracotta pestles besides ceramics of early historical period were found.

11. **Ahichchhatra, Village - Ramnagar, Tehsil - Aonla, District - Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh: 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14**

The site is traditionally associated with the story of the great epic Mahabharata when it was believed to have been the capital of Northern Panchala. It is also said that Gautama Buddha have delivered a sermon to the Naga King here while Parshvanath the Jain Tirthankar is also believed to have performed penance here. The ASI had conducted regular excavation at the site and the cultural deposit of the site started from OCP culture followed by Painted Grey Ware culture, NBP culture, Sunga-Kushana, Gupta, Post Gupta and Early Medieval respectively.

The excavation has revealed the mud structures like walls, ghost walls, rammed floors, and post holes etc. belonging to PGW Period. Since the structure made of mud lumps and highly disturbed. It is difficult to identify the shape and nature of the structures. The trenches also show ashy patches and burning impressions at places. Besides, the excavation has yielded a series of terracotta ring wells and circular wells without outlines. Vertical sand channels are noticed in the trenches on the entire.

The pottery repository of the site comprises PGW, few sherds of NBPW, Black slipped ware, Red ware, Gray Ware etc. dish and bowls are the predominant shapes in the PGW. The preliminary study of the pottery indicates that the PGW has paintings in black which comprises dots, dashes, circles, wavy lines, loops etc.

12. Lauriya-Arera: 2013-14

A small monastery has been exposed on eastern side of Asokan pillar. It consists of a court yard, having cells on the sides, with a platform in the centre. The central cell on the eastern arm is having a pedestal probably for enshrining any image or stupa.

The ceramic industry as well as other associated cultural remains suggests its construction and continuation from 1st century BC to 3rd century AD. Potteries retrieved are predominantly red ware and red slipped ware while limited quantity of tiny sherds of black slipped ware and grey ware have also been found.

13. Raja Bali Ka Garh (Balirajgarh), District Madhubani, Bihar: 2013-14

The excavation at site Raja Bali Ka Garh has revealed antiquities belonging to NBPW Period to Pala Period comprising four folded cultural period viz. Period-I (NBPW); Period-II (Sunga-Kusana); Period-III (Gupta), Period-IV (Pala or contemporary). Among the antiquities are terracotta plaques depicting male and female figurine with highly ornamentation, beads of semiprecious stones, animal figurines, terracotta bangle, beads, sling balls, copper antimony rod, etc. The brick built structure exposed during excavation can be ascribing to Gupta and Pala period. The finding of ceramic assemblage is the NBPW, Black Slip Ware, Grey Ware, Red Ware of varying types and shapes. However, the most noteworthy evidence is chronic deposit of silt notices across all the cuttings in same stratigraphic context which can be identified as flood deposit.

14. Gelderia, Pulicat, District Thiruvallur, Tamil Nadu: 2013-14

Excavation at Fort Gelderia, Pulicat, District Thiruvallur, Tamil Nadu was conducted from 2013-14. The fort was built in the year 1612 CE by Dutch and named it as Vastel Geldria after Gelderland, one of the states in Holland. The fort is square, with bastions at the corner. The curtain walls are built of brick, laterite with lime mortar. Within the fort, the most impressive structure is the gate to the cemetery. At present the fort area is fully covered with bushes and earth. Accordingly, the main aim of the excavation is to identify the layout of the fort Geldria and its remains. Six trenches were laid inside the fort on the east and south western side viz. PLC-XF5, XE5, XE4, F1, F2, and ZF2. The pottery assemblages in Pulicat are distinguished into two categories. Indigenous and imported variety (imported from China, Thai and Arab countries) like Zhangzhou (Blue colour under glaze looks dark gray), Jindzhen (Blue and White), Guangdong and Fujian ware. The antiquities consist of a copper coins (5 nos), Bronze ring, lid knob, bell (bronze), coat button (Bronze), pieces of iron, Iron nail, etc., Important discovery of the excavation is imposed seal impression of foreign origin on the smoking pipes (China Clay). It is very clear from this ceramics and antiquities that it was acted as an important maritime port town on Coramandal coast from the Medieval Period (11th Century CE) to Colonial period (19th Century CE).

15. Purana Qila, New Delhi: 2013-14

During the excavation, eight squares at the south-eastern slope up to bottom near Sher Mandal have been laid down. The present layout has followed the old layout system as available in previous records. The excavation revealed the eight fold sequence of cultures right from Maurya to Mughal without any break and finds of succeeding culture viz. British period from the surface as Maurya period, Sunga period, Kushan period, Gupta period, Post-Gupta period, Rajput period, Sultanate period, Mughal period.

16. Sarnath, District Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh: 2013-14

After a decade, the protected site of Sarnath was further excavated with the objectives to know the earliest deposit of the site. The important finding of the excavation is a statue of Lord Buddha in Gupta style, an inscribed staircase of Kushana period and a few minor antiquities. Interestingly, as per the objective of the excavation to know what happened between the time after Buddha and before Asoka, an AMS date of 385 B.C. was obtained from charcoal samples dated in BETA laboratory in USA.

17. Rajghat, District Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh: 2013-14

The archaeological mound representing ancient Kasi was excavated to confirm the date of earlier deposits and the dates are awaited from laboratories. However, beautiful terracotta figurines, objects of daily use and painted, plain and bichrome Northern Black Polished Ware were found besides contemporary ceramics, bricks structures of Sunga and Kushana period were also found.

18. Kayar, District Yavatmal, Maharashtra, 2014-15, Nagpur

The archaeological excavation conducted at the site indicates that the site, being a multicultural nature with fortification, was flourishing during the period especially from the Proto-historic to the Early Historical period. The excavations have reported some very important and interesting findings from the site comprising ceramics of various wares, red ware, black and red ware, black slip ware, red slip ware, dull red ware, kaolin local ware, terracotta tiles etc. The artefact assemblage from the excavation includes terracotta seal and sealings, lead, potin and copper coins, bone points, Iron objects like arrow heads, a gold bangle, dice, lajjagouri figurine, animal and human figurines, pendants, semiprecious stone and terracotta beads, etched beads, ear studs, shell and terracotta bangles, hopscotch, legged querns, and miniature potsherds etc. The structural remains of different phases also found during the excavation like house complex with platform storage jar and granary, terracotta ring well or soak pits, brick or stone well, tandoor, earth etc.

19. Binjore, District, Shri Ganga Nagar, Rajasthan, 2014-15 and 2015-16.

There are two cultural assemblages found during the excavation *i.e.* Early-Harappan and Mature-Harappan, represented by various antiquities such as fish-hook, arrowheads, knife, celt, bangles, terracotta bangles, faience bangles, shell bangles, beads of carnelian, agate, faience, gold foil and ring, terracotta toy cart frame, cake mustika & bull figurine. Harappan seal made of steatite depicting figure of unicorn with five letters on Harappan script. The early Harappan level has revealed pottery similar to the Kot-diji, which includes vase, basin, jar and goblet. Lots of storage pots have been found placed over stand to store the food grains. The structures of Early-Harappan period were made of mud bricks (size of 10:20:30 cm.) In the Early-Harappan phase Hakara ware (incised and mud applique design) has also been found.

20. Rukministhan, District, Nalanda, Bihar, 2014-15 and 2015-16

The mound revealed several structures like votive stupas, brick walls, steps to the north of the temple containing colossal image of Buddha and rammed floors etc.

The remains of an enclosure wall were exposed measuring about 25 m towards southern portion of the site. These structures as per their nature and associated antiquities and potteries are ranging from Gupta to Pala period. The important antiquities like terracotta sealings, inscribed tablets, fragments of sculptures of Ganesh and Avalokiteshvara, beads, sling balls, etc. were found during excavation. The pottery revealed from excavation consists of red ware and red slipped ware.

21. Suabarei, District Puri (Odisha) V, Bhubaneswar, 2014-15 and 2015-16

The significant achievement of the excavation at Suabarei is the evidence of a separate Neolithic horizon attested by the presence of gritty handmade potsherds of thin to medium fabric and a chisel of dolerite below chalcolithic level separated by a sterile layer number (11) measuring a maximum thickness of 55 cm in Qdt. 2 of XB1 and about 25 cm in Qdt. 4 of ZB2. Besides, a large number of charred animal bones having cut marks, charred tortoise cell, charred fish bones and pieces of mollusc cells and charred grains have also been found from the excavation. Circular huts with post holes, series of hearths, floor levels, burning activities with ash & charcoal and flood deposits have also been encountered during the course of excavation. Although the excavation has not yielded the any evidence of human burial, however, evidence of animal burial represented by animal bones along with miniature pots probably with favourite grave goods have been found which indicate the burial practice for their favourite animal.

The excavation at Suabarei has proved that it was an important Neo-Chalcolithic site in between the Daya River and the Gangua rivulet. They were subsisted by hunting, gathering, fishing and farming as evident from the charred animal bones, fish bones, fish hook and charred grains. A single shark tooth found from the excavation suggests some sort of probable sea link. Presence of carnivorous canine teeth also indicates the hunting of wild animals etc.

22. Keeladi, District, Madurai, Tamil Nadu, 2014-15 and 2015-16

The site has revealed early historic remains (c. 3rd BCE - 3rd CE) in the form of brick structures and also evinced interesting finds like Rouletted and Arretine pot sherds suggesting trade contacts maintained by this settlement with western world. These pot sherds are considered deluxe varieties and might have been reached here through traders. At a later date these varieties were imitated and manufactured locally at the site. Another important find during the excavations are that of inscribed pot sherds having names of individuals written in Tamil - Brahmi script over them.

Besides the above, the site has also yielded antiquities like glass, pearl and terracotta beads, terracotta figurines, grooved roof tiles, legged quern, antimony rods, spearhead, hop scotches, etc. The ceramic assemblages include early historic pottery like black and red ware, red ware, black ware, white painted black and red ware, russet coated ware etc.

23. Vangchhia, District Champai, Mizoram, 2015-16

A team of an archaeologist of Archaeological Survey of India has recently excavated the site at Vangchhia, District Champhai, Mizoram, They also discovered one of the Biggest Necropolis (Burials/related structures) in India.

24. Vadnagar, District, Mehsana, Gujarat, 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17

The excavation at Vadnagar was a multidisciplinary approach involving archaeology (geo and landscape archaeology), geo-informatics and sedimentology. The earliest deposit of the sites goes back to 1st- 2nd Century BCE at Baba -no Tekdo locality as more than 300 coins of various metals and alloys such as copper, lead, potin, billon etc. of different periods have been found during the course of excavation.

At Kirti Torana revealed remains of the 9th-10th Century CE so far. A few burnt brick structures like remains of houses, walls, floors, drains and a unique furnace was found during the course of excavation, besides fine quality of ceramics.

The entire process of study and analysis is to compose the several phases such as the digitization of known geo-morphological, geological and archaeological data from primary and secondary sources, creation of Digital Elevation Models (DEM) for the entire Mehsana district, creations of slope and aspects from resultant DEMs and employing complex algorithms and decisive models in ArcGIS.

Sequential Query Language or SQLs were created in ArcGIS to identify regional centres with close proximity to various resources and proximity to other sites. As a result several archaeological maps of various themes were recorded for Mehsana district with special reference to Vadnagar.

25. Excavation of camping site on Sasoma-Saser Road, Ladakh, 2016-17

Small scale excavation has been carried out at a prehistoric camping site on Sasoma-Saser Road, Nubra Valley, Lakdkh, Jammu & Kashmir. The excavation at this site has yielded the evidence of earliest dated human occupation in Ladakh pulling back to c. 8,500 BCE. This site has yielded, lithic artefacts and bone tools in association with a number of hearth activities.