



The Bangladesh National Museum , is the national museum of Bangladesh.<sup>[2]</sup> The museum is well organized and displays have been housed chronologically in several departments like department of ethnography and decorative art, department of history and classical art, department of natural history, and department of contemporary and world civilization. The museum also has a rich conservation laboratory. Nalini Kanta Bhattasali served as the first curator of the museum during 1914–1947.

Bangladesh National Museum is a national institute, focused on collection, preservation, research and interpretative display of historical documents, archaeological artifacts, decorative arts, ethnological materials and specimens of natural heritage of Bangladesh. Bangladesh National Museum (BNM), officially known as Bangladesh Jatiya Jadughar, owes its origin and growth to the Dhaka museum. The

museum is located at Shahbag in Dhaka city occupying 8.63 acres land, with a magnificent building, containing 44 galleries, a large library, three auditoriums and two exhibition halls. There are four other branch museums under the control of Bangladesh National Museum- these are AHSAN MANZIL Museum (Dhaka), Osmani Museum (Sylhet), Zia Smriti Museum (Chittagong) and Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin Sangrahashala (Mymensingh).

Histoty:

On 1st November 1856, The DHAKA NEWS reported news regarding the raising public demand of a museum in Dhaka. But in the nineteenth century nothing came about in response to the demand until Lord Curzon, the then Viceroy of British India, made a scope to establish a museum at Dhaka after the partition of Bengal in 1905. Subsequently the historic city of Dhaka became the capital of the new province of East Bengal and Assam. Since the coins of the Shillong cabinet was going to transfer at Dhaka, the new capital, HE Stapleton, the Honorary Government Numismatist, proposed a letter to the Director of Public Instruction to set up a museum at Dhaka. The proposal was brought to the attention of Sir Lancelot Hare, the Governor of the new province and passed an order for the selection of a site for a museum. But in 1911, the partition of Bengal was revoked and Dhaka had lost its position as a capital. As a result, the decision of setting up of a museum at Dhaka was fallen backside. Then the elite of Dhaka came forward and demanded for a museum with active interest.

On 25 July 1912, Lord Carmichael, the governor of the presidency of Bengal, attended at a conversation that held in the Northbrook Hall at Dhaka. On this occasion, the local elite presented to him an address of welcome emphasising on establishment of a museum. At the same time, they organised an exhibition of antiquities in order to impress the

governor for a museum. Lord Carmichael considered the demand making a grant of Rs. 2000 for setting up a museum at Dhaka. A room of the Old Secretariat Building was selected for the museum. Finally on 7 August in 1913, opened Lord Carmichael the Dacca Museum formally. A 30-member executive committee was formed to run the museum. FC French ICS, then the commissioner of Dhaka division, was selected as the president of the committee and HE Stapleton was the secretary. In 1914 Babu NALINI KANTA BHATTASALI was appointed Curator by the Executive Committee. Dr. N Gupta was appointed Superintendent of the Natural History Section of the museum.

HE Stapleton, the secretary of the Executive Committee, was interested to increase the collection of the museum, which was enriching day by day. More space was needed for displaying the new collections. Later on two more rooms were allotted in the same premises. In 1915, the Dacca Museum was shifted to the Baroduari (twelve doors) Building of Naib Nazims of Dhaka at Nimtali. Built in 1765, it was the Audience Hall and the Gatehouse of the Nimtali Kothi. But it took a long time to have the Bangladesh National Museum (BNM) complex at Shahabagh Avenue. BNM was opened to the public here on 17 November in 1983.

HE Stapleton, Satyendranath Bhadra, Sayed Awlad Hasan, BK Das, Kwaja Muhammad Eusuf, HAKIM HABIBUR RAHMAN, NK Bhattasali, JT Rankin, AH Clayton, Professir RB Ramsbotham and SYED MUHAMMED TAIFOOR include Elites of Dhaka those who played the lead role for establishing the Dhaka Museum. However the contribution of NK Bhattasali, the first curator of the Museum was outstanding. He physically supervised the archaeological excavation throughout the country for exploring and collecting exhibits to enrich the museum. He organised exhibitions, prepared labels, designed showcase, classified and documented the exhibits accurately and preserved them properly. He was an outstanding research scholar who upheld the museum in the international arena through publishing original research works. He devoted his life for the development of the museum.

After the death of Bhattasali in 1947, the Dhaka Museum had no curator for about 4 years. Meanwhile a press agency occupied the museum building and the collection got least priority and attention. Then from 1951-1952, it was put under a part-time honorary curator one after another, - mostly teachers of the Dhaka University. Among them, the most prominent was AHMED HASAN DANI who personally took interest to develop the museum and enriched its collection. In 1962, Enamul Haque was appointed as a full time Assistant Curator who was promoted to the Curator in 1965. This post was subsequently re-designated as the Director.



An exhibition gallery of National Museum

By this time a large number of historical exhibits were shifted to the Dhaka museum from the Royal palace of Dinajpur and the Baldha Museum, established by Narendra Narayana Roy Chowdhury, a landlord. He set up the museum by collecting important ancient and mediaeval artifacts personally. After his death the exhibits of this museum were shifted to the Dhaka museum collections. It may be mentioned that Syed Muhammed Taifoor and Hakim Habibur Rahman presented a large number of objects to the Dhaka museum from their personal collection.

In 1970, the Dhaka Museum Board of Trustees was formed to run the museum as an autonomous body. In 1972, the Board of Trustees submitted a scheme to setup national museum. In 1974, the government constituted an eleven member National Museum Commission to formulate a project at this end. The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) approved the project in December 1975 and selected Shabag for its new site. Architect Robert C. Boghe designed the museum building while the then Director Dr. Enamul Haque was upgraded as Director General of the Museum. He also played active role to develop the National Museum.

*Organising Structure* Bangladesh National Museum, an autonomous institution under the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, runs by a Board of Trustees, appointed by the Government. It is financed by the state though the museum earns an amount from entry ticket and rental of auditoriums.

The Director General, executive chief of the BNM is appointed by the government. The BNM has four curatorial and three others departments. These are:

- (1) Natural History
- (2) History and Classical Art
- (3) Ethnography and Decorative Art
- (4) Contemporary Art and World Civilisation
- (5) Conservation Laboratory
- (6) Public Education and
- (7) Administration.

Each of the department is run by professionally qualified curator, designated as Keeper. There are professional curatorial staffs under the Keeper such as Deputy Keepers, Assistant Keepers etc. There are also adequate clerical, caretaking and cleaning staffs those who play

significant role to run the museum. Besides these, there is an administrative department comprised of security, account, engineering and administrative sections. The administrative department is headed by a Deputy Secretary appointed by the government.

*Objects and Galleries* Bangladesh National Museum is a multidisciplinary museum. Collections from several disciplines such as archaeology, history, ethnography and natural history are displayed here. The number of exhibits, from different disciplines collected upto 2009, was 86,000.

*Natural History* The first 10 galleries are dedicated to the natural heritage of Bangladesh. The collections consist of flora and fauna, such as cereals, pulses, herbal medicines, economically important plants, insects, birds, sea life of the Bay of Bengal, Sundarbans, the largest mangrove forest, its spotted dears and the Royal Bengal tiger. Geographical specimens included rocks and minerals, etc. The galleries contain semi-dioramas, dioramas on birds and mammals with their natural habitats. A large skeleton of a giant whale saw fish, beehive, different types of butterflies and reptiles are the other notable objects of these galleries. Natural history specimens preserved in the departmental store serve as a reference library of the biodiversity of Bangladesh.

*History and Classical Art* This is a very rich department in the museum which deals with the archaeological and historical artifacts. About 68,000 historical objects including 53,000 ancient and medieval coins so far have been collected and put on display in 11 galleries to portray the historical evolution and cultural heritage of the nation. The collections consist of different types of terracotta widely used for wall decoration in the ancient and mediaeval architectures and hand axes, potteries, magnificent stone and bronze sculptures, fascinating ancient architectural specimens, ancient inscriptions and coins, manuscripts, historical documents, medals and miniature paintings. The world famous, classical, decorated and well-executed Hindu and Buddhist

Bengal sculptures gallery are main attraction for the visitors from home and abroad. These archaeological artifacts bear the testimony of an anciently well-ordered civilised and rich cultural heritage of a nation. There are also two specific galleries to portray the nation's historic language movement and the war of independence. Exhibits relating to freedom fighting activities, genocides, photographs of refugee camps, posters of liberation war and a copy of the constitution mentioned which indicate the glorious and brave historical emergence of a nation.



Architecture:

### **Things to see inside and around:**

The museum premises is surrounded by different types of trees. On both sides of the entrance of the building there are two historical canons. Just after entering into the 4 storied building, you can see the aesthetic Novera sculpture. On the ground floor, there are museum office, hall room and other necessary establishments. On the 1st, 2nd and 3rd floor, all historical objects are preserved and open for display.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> floor, visitors will get a very transparent view on entire Bangladesh. Here, you can see the Bangladeshi map, trees, animals, tribal life, rocks, minerals, the Sunder bans and various coins and architectures of ancient ages.

On the 2nd floor, there are Bangladeshi weapons, porcelain handicrafts, puppets and musical instruments, clothes and apparels, embroidered



bed cover, manuscripts, contemporary arts and traditional Bangladesh. Here, you will also get an idea about world civilization and fine arts.

On the 3rd floor, portraits of world's renowned personalities, world's fine arts and world civilization are displayed.

### **Quality and management of preservation:**

There are some very valuable tokens in the museum which cannot be collected again. These tokens are preserved in the storeroom with much care; sufficient security people are engaged in this purpose.



### **Gallery:**

The museum gallery is divided in four segments:



#Natural history

#Mankinds and Arts

#History and Classic Artistry

#Contemporary Artistry and World Civilization

### **#Natural History:**

This part of the gallery is decorated with the history of plants and trees, diversity of Animal kingdom and Insects etc.

### **#Mankinds and Arts:**

This part of the gallery accommodates traditional Bengali clothes and apparels, religious festivals, customs and rituals, ornaments and other relics of ancient Bengal etc.

### **#History and Classic Artistry:**

This part of the gallery is decorated with the history of our great liberation war and language movement and some other archaeological relics.

### **# Contemporary Artistry and World Civilization:**

Creations of the great artists like the Shilpacharjjo(Master of Arts) Joynul Abedin, Potua(the Painter) Kamrul Hasan and S.M.Sultan are collected

and displayed in this part. Besides, there are illustrations of Chinese, Nepalese, Bhutanese, Egyptian and Iranian cultures.

### **Competitions based on Special days, Opportunity of Group visit:**

On the National days the National Museum authority organizes competitions on painting, composition, recitation and handwriting specially based on the theme of those days. Competitions are open for students from Play group to Class-X.

Students of schools, colleges or any other institutions can get the opportunity to have a group visit to the museum through an application to the museum authority; if required, the authority offers a free visit.

### **Auditorium, Library and Canteen:**

The museum auditorium can be hired for arranging different kinds of meetings, seminars etc. The auditorium has three rooms. The rent of the large room is tk14000/day while rent of the smaller ones ranges from tk5000-tk7000/day.

The museum has its own library on the first floor. 30000 to 40000 books are over there. These books are a great help to the researchers. The museum canteen is located on the South side of the staircase of the ground floor. Here you can have tea, coffee and biscuits, though at a higher price.

**Visiting hours:**

This museum is open for all throughout the week except Thursday. Much crowd is seen here on weekly holidays and National days. Three different visiting hours are scheduled in three different seasons in a year. These seasons are Summer, Winter and the month of Holy Ramadan. The museum remains open as per the following schedule:

In the Summer (April- September): Saturday-Wednesday- 10.30a.m.-05.30p.m.

Friday-03.00p.m.-08.00p.m.

In the Winter(October- March) : Saturday-Wednesday-09.30a.m.-04.30p.m.

Friday- 03.00p.m.-08.00p.m.

In the Holy month of Ramadan : Saturday-Wednesday-09.30a.m.-03.00p.m.

**Tickets:**

You have to collect your ticket from the counter beforehand. The counter is just beside the main gate.

**Price of Tickets:**

for 3-12, tk 5/person

for above 12,tk10/person

for Foreigners,tk75/person

Students and children are allowed to visit the museum for free during Pohela Boishakh(1st day of the Bangla Year),26th March and 21st February.

**Entry and Exit, Guide service, things to do:**

You can take the help of a guide while entering into the museum. The museum authority have engaged 7 guides for the visitors' convenience. You have to leave your bags and other things to the security men in the entry point. Carrying camera and food is prohibited; and you must switch off your cell phones inside the museum.

The museum has one way entry and exit.