

The national museums



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The Colombo museum as it was called at the beginning was established on 1 January 1877. Its founder was Sir William Henry Gregory the British Governor of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) at the time. The Royal Asiatic Society (RAS) was instrumental in bringing to the notice of Gregory on his appointment as Governor in 1872 the need for a public Museum with much difficulty the approval of the legislative council was obtained within a year. The Architect of the Public Works Department, J. G.

Smither was able to prepare the plans for new structure on Italian Architectural style. The construction was completed in 1876 and the Museum commenced its functions in the following year. The construction of the Museum was carried out by Arasi Marikar Wapchi Marikar (born 1829, died 1925, aka Wapchi Marikar Bass, who was descended from the Sheiq Fareed family who arrived in Ceylon in 1060 AD), paternal grandfather of Sir Razik Fareed, Kt. , JPUM, OBE, MP (born, 29 December 1893, died 23 August 1984).

Wapchi Marikar Bass was the builder of the General Post Office in Colombo, Colombo Customs, Old Town Hall in Pettah, Galle Face Hotel, Victoria Arcade, Finlay Moir building, the Clock Tower, Batternburg Battery and many other buildings that are still standing today (2011). The Old Town Hall in Pettah, which is now a busy market, was built on a contract for the sum of 689 Sterling Pounds. In January 1877, the completed building of the Colombo Museum was declared open by His Excellency, Governor Gregory, in the presence of a large crowd, amongst which there were many Muslims present.

At the end of the ceremony, His Excellency asked Arasi Marikar Wapchi Marikar what honour he wished to have for his dedication. The same

question was asked by His Excellency from the carpenter who assisted Wapchi Marikar with the wood work of the Museum who desired a local Rank and was honoured accordingly. Wapchi Marikar, noticing the large number of Muslims present, feared that they would spend their time at the Museum on Friday during the Islamic congregation prayer, and requested that the Museum be closed on Fridays. This request has been adhered to by all authorities in charge of the Museum to this day.

When the throne of the last Kandyan King was to be exhibited at the Museum, the then Prime Minister, Mr. D. S. Senanayake, obtained the consent of Sir Razik Fareed, Wapchi Marikar's grandson, to keep the Museum open on the intervening Fridays only. During the period between 1877 and 1999, the authorities of the museum took various steps to display the cultural and natural heritage of the country for this purpose. Several other wings were added from time to time under the direction of Dr. Arthur Willey and Dr. Joseph Pearson new structures were built during the period of Dr.

P. E. P. Deraniyagala, Dr. P. H. D. H. de Silva and Sirinimal Lakdusinghe. One of the natural history museum, and yet another consists of the auditorium. These buildings would facilitate the extension of the library ethnological and Anthropological studies, etc With the development of the museum to international level, it earned the status of a national museum during the period of Dr. P. E. P. Deraniyagala. He was able to open up branch museums in Jaffna, Kandy, and Rathnapura and a full - fledged department of national museum was established in 1942 under the act No. 1.

The extension of the number of branch museums has now increased to nine and in addition a school science programme and a mobile museum service

are also in operation. The installation of the crown jewels and the throne of the last King of Kandy which were handed over back to Sri Lanka by the British Government, has greatly enhanced the quality of the museum collection. In spite of the enormousness of the various collections thematic arrangement of the galleries has provided and opportunity to visitors to study the ancient culture of the Sri Lanka under one roof.

This process has further been improved by the arrangement of the galleries of the ground floor in a historical sequence and those of the upper galleries on a thematic basis. Along with the Colombo National Museum, a library was also established on 1 January 1877. The government Oriental library (1870) was incorporated in to Colombo National Museum library, and served as the nucleus of the library collection by collecting the local publications during the past 129 years; the library has been functioning as an unofficial national library in Sri Lanka; became the first legal Deposit library in the Island.

This resulted in the accumulation of a valuable collection of materials pertaining to Sri Lanka. From its inception, special attention has been given to building up of a collection related to Sri Lanka, Orientation and Natural Science The National Museum of Kandy in Kandy, Sri Lanka is located next to the Temple of the Tooth in part of the former Royal Palace of Kandy. The primary exhibits are housed in the Palle Vahala building which was house to the King's harem. A secondary exhibit location is found in the main palace building.

Its is maintained by the Department of National Museum of the central government. The Palle Vahala was used as a depository for historic artifacts made by the Kandy Art Association which was established in 1832 and

artisans of Matale. The museum was opened to the public in 1942. Artifacts consist of weapons, jewelry, tools and other artifacts from the Kandian era and post British Colonial era. On the grounds of the museum is a statue of Sir Henry Ward a former Governor of Ceylon, which was originally found in front of the Queen's Hotel.