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Diverse lifestyles of Islamic communities on display at National Museum

By Margaret Perry, Channel NewsAsia | Posted: 27 March 2007 2306 hrs

SINGAPORE : The lifestyles of the Arab world and Turkey are on display at the National Museum of Singapore.

The exhibition highlights the diversity across the different communities.

In the nomadic communities of the Arabic world, everything is portable and practical: the tents roll up, the rugs act as floor coverings and sleeping blankets and the cooking utensils are hardy.

However the permanent rural homes are still made from whatever material is available, such as clay, mud and reeds.

This diversity is a key focus of the travelling exhibition by Vitra Design Museum in Germany.

Hairini Hassan, Curatorial Project Manager, National Museum of Singapore, said: "I would think this exhibition would appeal to both Muslims and non-Muslims because it's really an eye-opener. This is very different, cultural and design-based, it is interesting to see how all these different cultures live in very different dwellings."

But it is not just homes that are featured.

Alexander von Vegesack, Director, Vitra Design Museum, Germany, said: "Even in the smallest village you would find a hammam (traditional Arab bath-house). It is very important. It is not only about cleaning your body but also about relaxing your body, caring for yourself."

People visit the hammams at least once a week and are important social meeting places in both the rural and urban areas.

And modern city architecture is also on display showing contemporary buildings and utensils.

But the destruction of communities and cities is also on display in the "Images from the Arab World" exhibition.

This video installation is by Lebanese artist Jocelyn Saab who captured the pictures while working as a war journalist in Beirut.

But more positive images of daily life are also on display with photos ranging from the early 20th century to now.

These two exhibitions are part of a two-month festival called "Living Under The Crescent Moon" being held at the museum.

Other activities include dances such as whirling dervishes, movies and public talks. - CNA/ch

