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Glimpse of nomadic lifestyle

WHEN the year 2002 ended with the hugely successful The Glorious Swords: Prophet and His Companions exhibition, the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur promised another unique event to start the new year.

True to its words, the museum begins its new calendar with Beyond Boundaries - Tents of the Islamic World exhibition, said to be the first of its kind in Southeast Asia.

The displays - five original tents from regions along the Silk Road - offers a glimpse into the world of the nomads and an understanding of the lives they led.

Held in collaboration with the Museum of Ethnography Hamburg, Germany which owns four of the tents, the exhibition was officially opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad recently.

Four tents are from Central Asian cultures - Kirghiz, Turkmen, Turkish and Mongolian - and are displayed in their entirety, fully equipped with all the typical furnishings.

The fifth is the unique Egyptian ceremonial tent belonging to the Islamic Art Museum.

Most of the tents are decorated with unique furnishings, adornments and details like kitchen utensils. Also featured are accessories and clothes. These give an insight into the nomad lifestyle.

As an interactive tool aimed particularly at children, an original tent will be assembled to provide an educational and ethnographical experience. Games, craft and storytelling sessions relating to the exhibition will also be held.

Throughout the 18-week exhibition, the museum plans to invite notable local and international scholars to conduct lectures and seminars teamed with demonstrations and workshops. These activities are open free of charge to the public.

The tents are on display at the Special Gallery 2 from 10am to 6pm everyday except Mondays. It is on until May 31. Entrance is RM8 for adults, RM4 for students and senior citizens, and RM3 for schoolchildren in uniform in a group of 30. Children below six are admitted free.

There is another interesting exhibition at the Special Gallery 1 on until March 31 and featuring 21 text panels examining the construction, site and design of several significant Islamic Mosques designed and renovated by Dr Abdel Wahed El-Wakil.