Culture key benchmark for development

Says Mohamed bin Zayed as he receives and congratulates winners of Sheikh Zayed Book Award

ABU DHABI / WAM

Culture has been and will remain the key benchmark for the development and progress of nations, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, affirmed while receiving winners of the Sheikh Zayed Book Award (SZBA) 2016 at Al Bahr Palace on Monday.

"We, in the UAE, consider science and culture an integral part of our cultural legacy, development process and building of both human being and an open mind with a confident identity that does not compromise values, originality and heritage," HH Sheikh Mohamed said.

HH congratulated the winners of the 10th edition of the award, namely the Lebanese-born French novelist, Amin Maalouf, winner of the Cultural Personality of the Year. He appreciated the role being played by intellectual, literary and media personalities for instilling the values of science and knowledge in the community through their intellectual and creative works to which they deserve recognition.

HH also thanked guests at the fair, particularly Italian writers, who represented Italy as the guests of honour in this year's cycle of the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair (ADIBF). Their participation, HH noted, had allowed Arab readers to learn about the rich cultural and creative work of a country that the UAE has strong bonds of friendship with.

"The ADIBF and the SZBA, along with other cultural events in the country, underscore the recognition of the UAE, led by President His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, of the true value both science and knowledge to the community and their vital role in developing the human being and building the future through the development of thought and heightening of awareness so as to cope with transformations and address challenges," HH said, noting the President's initiative to make 2016 a Year for Reading.

The winners were accompanied by Dr. Ali bin Tamim, the Award's Secretary-General, a delegation from the International Prize for Arabic Fiction (IPAF), a number of key intellectual, literary and media figures participating in the 26th Abu Dhabi International Book Fair, fair organisers, officials from the Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority (TCA), as well as a group of Emirati writers.

The winners of the award expressed their delight at visiting the UAE, which they said is celebrating the Year of Reading as a landmark to encourage reading and hone literary skills of members of the community with more knowledge - the main driving force for development and cultural and human progress.

They paid tribute to the UAE leadership for encouraging intellectuals and writers to produce more works.

Present at the meeting were H.H. Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Ruler’s Representative in the Western Region, HH Sheikh Tahnoun bin Mohammed Al Nahyan, Abu Dhabi Ruler’s Representative in the Eastern Region, HH Sheikh Saif bin Mohammed Al Nahyan, HH Sheikh Nahyan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan Charitable and Humanitarian Foundation, H.H. Lt. General Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, HH Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Chief of the Abu Dhabi Crown Prince's Court, HH Sheikh Omar bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan Charitable and Humanitarian Foundation, H.H. Sheikh Khalid bin Zayed Al Nahyan Chairman of the Board of Zayed Higher Organisation for Humanitarian Care & Special Needs (ZHO), Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister of Culture and Knowledge Development, Sheikh Hamdan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, and a number of Sheikhs and senior officials.