Sheikh Zayed Award winners honoured at Adnec ceremony

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ABU DHABI // The future belongs to those who love books and those who love knowledge, Lebanese-born French author Amin Maalouf told the audience at the Sheikh Zayed Book Award ceremony yesterday.

Maalouf, who accepted the Cultural Personality of the Year Award, said books helped to build hope and self-belief—“belief that the future is not only for others, but is also for us, for our children and our daughters.

“The future belongs to all those who love science, knowledge, arts, literature—to all those who love knowledge and creativity and innovation.” Maalouf was one of seven authors, intellectuals and publishers who won at the 10th annual awards.

Emirati Dr Jamal Al Suwaidi said he was honoured to have won the “contribution to the development of the nations” award for his book Al Sarab (The Mirage), published by the Emirates Centre for Strategic Studies and Research.

The award meant a lot to him because it is named after Sheikh Zayed, said Al Suwaidi. “It’s close to my heart.”

Awards are presented to outstanding writers and thinkers whose works have enriched Arab cultural, literary and social life.

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You can’t change the story that others perceive if you didn’t create a story. So, you know, we are creating stories and I hope to see more of that.” Andre Gaspard, who accepted the publishing and technology award on behalf of his publishing house, Dar Al Saqi, said the award was very special.

“Although it has a big financial value, its biggest value by far is moral,” said Gaspard. “When you win, or even when you’re shortlisted, you are very happy that you have been noticed because it’s a very special prize. It’s the moral aspect of the award - it’s not just any prize.”

Dr Ali bin Tamim, secretary general of Sheikh Zayed Book Award, said the award built on the vision set by the Founding President, who paved the way for the UAE to develop into a knowledge economy.

Dr bin Tamim said it was a path followed by the President, Sheikh Khalifa, and Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, who continued to devote “the unlimited support of culture, arts and thinking because these are the cornerstone of this country.”

“In Abu Dhabi, we believe that facing the big challenges starts from knowledge, and continues with science and culture and with enlightenment,” he said.