Shaikh Zayed Book Awards presented

LEBANESE-BORN NOVELIST MAALOUF RECEIVES CULTURAL PERSONALITY OF THE YEAR AWARD INCLUDING DH1M CASH PRIZE

ABU DHABI
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Seven winners of the 10th Shaikh Zayed Book Awards were given Dh3.5 million in prizes for their immense cultural contribution to society at a ceremony held at the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair yesterday evening.

Shaikh Mansour Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Presidential Affairs, who was accompanied by Shaikh Nahyan Bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister of Culture and Knowledge Development, presented the winners with their awards in the presence of noted intellectuals and literary figures.

Six of the winners received Dh750,000 each, a gold medal and a certificate of merit with the exception of the winner for the Cultural Personality of the Year, who received a Dh1 million cash prize.

The Lebanese-born French novelist Amin Maalouf, 2016 Cultural Personality of the Year, was the star of the evening and was praised for his achievements as an exceptional novelist.

In a moving speech, Maalouf thanked everyone who had supported him and said, “The future belongs to all those who love science, art... the future belongs to those who love books, it belongs to those who love life.”

Maalouf was the only winner to give a speech at the ceremony. Speaking to Gulf News on the sidelines of the ceremony about the importance of the award he said: “It is important to give culture a primary place in society. We tend to give a lot of importance to other aspects of life that are important like politics or economy but culture is sometimes considered secondary while I think one cannot build self-esteem in a society without culture.”

Speaking about his next project he said, “When I go back to Paris at the end of this month I will begin concentrating on my next book. Like I do always, I isolate myself and then work on a new book.”

Ready wit

As to what he was going to do with the Dh1 million prize money he joked: “I haven’t thought about the money, there is any money?”

The Shaikh Zayed Book Awards are presented every year to outstanding Arab writers, intellectuals, publishers as well as young talents whose writings and translations of humanities have scholarly and objectively enriched Arab cultural, literary and social life.

The Shaikh Zayed Book Awards were established in memory of Shaikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, and his pioneering role in fostering national unity and development. It is an independent cultural award administered by Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority (TCA Abu Dhabi), with a total monetary value of Dh7 million.

Two categories, the Children’s Literature and Young Author, did not meet the awards standards this year and consequently the Board of Trustees opted to withhold the awards allocated to them.