



WAM

Cherished prize

■ Shaikh Mohammad receives the Cultural Personality of the Year award from Shaikh Mohammad Bin Zayed in Abu Dhabi yesterday. Shaikh Mohammad said the award was special for him as it is named after Shaikh Zayed.

Zayed was nation in one man, Mohammad says

Vice-President honoured as Cultural Personality of the Year at Shaikh Zayed Book Awards ceremony

ABU DHABI

By **SAMI ZAATARI**
Staff Reporter

His Highness Shaikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, was yesterday honoured as the Cultural Personality of the Year at the 9th edition of the Shaikh Zayed Book Awards ceremony.

Shaikh Mohammad was presented the award by His Highness Shaikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, in recognition of his work and initiatives in promoting the UAE and its culture, as well as many social causes.

The award recognises individuals and institutions that have made significant contributions in literature, culture, and knowledge. The award also honours non-Arab researchers and authors who

promote Arab culture in their own languages.

After accepting his award, Shaikh Mohammad, in an emotional speech, spoke of the successful leadership attributes of the late Shaikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan and recounted how the union of the UAE was established, thanks to his commitment.

Big challenges

He said: "I would like to tell you a story about the founders [of the UAE], I knew Zayed before the establishment of the union. As you know there were nine emirates and he visited all emirates. One day Zayed and Rashid [Shaikh Mohammad's father] met in a small tent and sat on the floor with some cushions, they prayed together and had lunch. I had the honour to serve them coffee from another tent next to their tent. The challenges at the time were very big, they were related to the fact that Arab peoples did not establish unions and some foreign countries didn't want unions to be established."

Thanks to Shaikh Zayed's strong commitment the challenges were met and the union was formed, Shaikh Moham-

mad said. "The persistence of Zayed and his wisdom made the union with Rashid, after the rest of the emirates signed and that was the beginning." He used to meet with students, teachers, with everyone. When he moved everyone moved. Zayed wasn't one among us, he was the nation in one man, and I can say now Zayed, your children are now global and they have reached out to the world," Shaikh Mohammad said.

Shaikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Foreign Minister, senior officials and shaikhs were among those present.

Among the others who were honoured this year was Palestinian writer Osama Alaysa, whose novel *Majaneed Bait Lahem (The Fools of Bethlehem)* won in the best literature category. Alaysa's novel narrates the history and changes that took place in Bethlehem.

The total cash prize for this year's award is Dh7 million, with the Cultural Personality of the Year award getting Dh1 million.

The other four category winners are awarded Dh750,000 each.

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