

Speech of Dr.  
**MUHAMMAD YOUSUF NAJM**  
Co- Winner of the 1992 King Faisal International Prize  
For Arabic Literature  
(Translations into Arabic of Literary and Critical Studies)

Your Royal Highnesses,

Distinguished Guests,  
Gentlemen,

It is the greatest of honours to stand before you and receive this Prize so distinguished by carrying the name of a great Saudi monarch.

A great deal has been said in praise of this Prize. To me it is the international character of the Prize that is most praiseworthy. This puts it above narrow affiliation to a particular country, a particular race, a particular creed. Indeed it is an embodiment of God the Almighty's address "Oh ye the faithful, I have created you out of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know each other. The noblest of you in God's sight are those that fear him the most, for he is the most knowledgeable, the most expert."

Knowing each other, which we now call communication, is the road toward rapport which, in turn, is the road toward the exchange of discoveries, expertise, knowledge and science, all of which elements enhance man's situation on earth. The meaning of Taqua (fear of God), beside its religious connotation, can extend toward the doing of good, the improvement of science in modern man's world for the purpose of achieving man's happiness on earth.

It is my belief that the Prize, in the way it connotes the meanings of brotherhood, affection, and cooperation in serving man's good and happiness, was what the late King Faisal had in mind fifteen years before the Prize was established.

In February 1965 I had the honour of meeting his Majesty King Faisal. The background of that meeting was that some time earlier I had been appointed Chairman of the Department of Arabic and Near Eastern Languages at the American University of Beirut (AUB). I was charged with drawing a plan for the development of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the AUB. After the plan was drawn I consulted my friend and student, the late Umar Saqqaf, about it during one of his visits to Beirut. He advised me to come to Saudi Arabia and present the plan to His Majesty. He arranged an audience and

I met the King. We had a long discussion about the causes of scientific revival I vividly remember him saying, "We are rich in religion and faith but poor in science and civilisation. We consume what others produce. We have given the world a religion, a legal system, advances in science and civilisation, and that's our credit to the world. It is now time to get the debt back. And the way to do this is to provide scientists with encouragement and a helpful environment to work in, so that our present will make the scientific achievements and progress which our glorious past had so much of."

The late King Faisal was looking forward to a renaissance of this nation and worked very hard to bring this renaissance about. Two great monarchs have succeeded him and worked just as hard to achieve his goal. Today Saudi Arabia, in the reign of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, is proud to have seven universities, numerous distinguished hospitals, research centers, public libraries, specialized

journals, and thousands of students on scholarships to study abroad. Surely, this is all a reflection of the wisdom of this country's leadership.

It may be in the spirit of this year's theme for the Arabic Literature prize, namely Translations of Literary and Critical Works, that the establishment of a world-class center of Arabization and translation may be considered somewhere in the Arab world. Such centers were established in earlier times, as during the reign of the Abbasids Al-Rasheed and Al-Mamoon and during the reign of Egypt's Muhammad Ali. Those centers rendered great service in translating works of science and literature into the Arabic language, thus exposing us to the genius of other nations.

I feel that winning this prize is not only an honour to my humble person but to all men of science and knowledge. And it bodes well for the future.

I do not consider this prize a crowning of forty years of my scientific travails; I rather consider it a reminder that good works get recognized. And it encourages me to go on serving my nation, my language, my culture. Indeed I vow to do this right here before you, your Majesty, your Highnesses, distinguished guests.

Thank you very much. God bless you all.