

Special Reports

1001 Inventions pulls crowds in New York

Updated : Monday January 24 , 2011 9:49:52 PM



JEDDAH: The 1001 Inventions Exhibition, showcasing Muslim contributions to science, technology and arts, has drawn a large number of visitors since its opening at the New York Hall of Science recently.

The exhibition, organized by the 1001 Inventions Foundation in cooperation with ALJ Community Initiatives, has already visited London and Istanbul as part of a global tour.

The exhibition takes the visitors on a tour through its seven divisions to see replicas of the astonishing inventions of the Middle Ages.

It reveals the huge impact of Muslim civilization on today's life. Visitors start the tour watching a documentary titled "1001 Inventions and Library of Secrets".

Displayed on a seven-meter high screen, the 13-minute documentary accompanies a group of children in a journey in which they discover the period mistakenly referred as the Dark Ages.

Starring in the documentary is Oscar winner Sir Ben Kingsley, who plays the role of the 18th century Engineer Al-Jazari. The children discover a wealth of knowledge about the Muslim inventions in the period from the 7th to 17th centuries.

The documentary has won several international awards from the US and Europe.

Fadi Mohammed Jameel, president of ALJ Community Initiatives International, said that by sponsoring 1001 Inventions, ALJ Community Initiatives hopes to become a role model and help inspire generations of young people from diverse backgrounds and from all over the world, but particularly the Muslim world, to explore the possibility of becoming entrepreneurs in science and technology.

Jameel said that they hope to be able to remind these potential inventors of the future of the great achievements and contributions that their ancestors made to the civilized world.

He highlighted the importance of cooperation between the private and public sectors for the benefit of the community, saying that ALJ Community Initiatives is seeking to be a role model in countries in which Abdul Latif Jameel has operations.

In a report last month, the New York Times mentioned that the exhibition displays inventions of some of history's finest scientists and scholars who emerged from predominantly Muslim societies, extending from Spain to China.

The US newspaper interviewed professor Salim Al-Hassani, chairman of the Foundation for Science, Technology and Civilization (FSTC) and 1001 Inventions and author of 1001 Inventions, and Margaret Honey, president and chief executive of the New York Hall of Science, who said she is pleased that the exhibition is in New York.

Early last year, the 1001 Inventions was displayed in London in cooperation with the Science Museum in London for five months, and attracted 400,000 visitors, including Prince Mohammed bin Nawaf, Saudi ambassador to the UK, who said that the exhibition would make young Muslims and Arabs more confident and encourage them to know more about science and technology.

"It comes in line with the concept of cultural dialogue initiated by Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah," he said.

The exhibition displays several inventions, including a 6.5 meter-water clock invented by Badi Alzaman Abul Izz in the 13th Century and a flight model of the Arab aviation scientist Abbas Ibn Firnas.

The exhibition is using advanced IT technologies and interactive educational games, and unveils for the first time the role women played in science, as well as the role of non-Muslim scientists who lived in the Muslim civilization.

The exhibition shows how Muslims nurtured the scientific and industrial heritage of Chinese, Indian, Greek and Egyptian civilizations.

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan inaugurated the exhibition in Istanbul, where it was displayed for two months drawing 420,000 visitors.

"I am continuously advising Arab and Muslim governments to include achievements and inventions of the Muslim civilization in their educational curriculum. More than five million Islamic manuscripts scattered throughout the world are still facing financial difficulties to be verified," said Al-Hassani, who is also professor of mechanical engineering and currently an Honorary Professorial Fellow at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Manchester.

He said the Muslim world has a wealth of experiences, which could be improved through the adoption of modern sciences and technology.