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British Science Association honours Muslim Heritage pioneer

By Junaid Bhatti
Monday, 05 October 2009 15:10



A leading British-Arab engineer has been granted Fellowship of the British Science Association for his work to promote the scientific and technological achievements within Muslim cultures. Professor Salim T S Al-Hassani, of Manchester University, has spent the last two decades debunking the myth of "The Dark Ages" by raising awareness of the scientific achievements that took place in India, China, Muslim Spain and the Middle East between the 7th and 17th centuries.

Every year the British Science Association bestows Honorary Fellowship upon individuals who have "promoted openness about science in society" and "engaged and inspired adults and young people with science and technology". Previous recipients have included BBC TV presenters Sir David Attenborough, Prof. Jim Al-Khalili and Prof. Robert Winston (now Lord Winston).

Prof. Al-Hassani is best known as Chief Editor of the book '1001 Inventions: Muslim Heritage in Our World', which highlights a thousand years of social, scientific and technical achievements that are currently under-recognised in schools' textbooks. The Professor recently announced plans to distribute 3000 copies of the book to UK schools free of charge.

He commented: "It is a great honour to be recognised by the British Science Association as an Honorary Fellow. Science crosses all cultural and religious boundaries and researching the roots of modern science has highlighted to me the great debt we all owe to people of many creeds and colours. How true was Isaac Newton when he remarked that if he had seen more than others it was because he was standing on the shoulders of giants. I'm grateful for the opportunity to bring this message to the public, and humbled that the BSA has recognised my work in this way".

"The period between the 7th and 17th centuries, that has been erroneously labeled 'The Dark Ages' was in fact a time of exceptional scientific and cultural advancement in China, India, the Arab world and Southern Europe. This is the period in history that gave us the first manned flight, huge advances in engineering, the development of robotics and the foundations of modern mathematics, chemistry and physics".

Speaking at the award ceremony, Lord May, President of the British Science Association, said: "Honorary Fellowship of the British Science Association is a distinguished honour, conferred to date on just 81 people. Prof. Al-Hassani's interest in the history of science and technology, and specifically within Muslim cultures, has earned him a worldwide reputation. He was instrumental in the development of the '1001 Inventions' Exhibition and educational materials about the contributions of scientists and technologists working within Muslim cultures."

This year, Honorary Fellowship has also been conferred to BBC TV presenter

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13°C 6.1 m/s 39.2 mm

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Wednesday	07.10.2009
18:00	
00:00	13°C
	39.2mm 6.1m/s
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Adam Hart-Davis and writer Bill Bryson – both of whom have worked to bring science to life for a large public audience – and to other celebrated scientists such as Sir David King, the Chief Scientist to Her Majesty's government.

Professor Salim T S Al-Hassani is emeritus professor of Mechanical Engineering (UMIST) and currently a professorial fellow at the School of Languages, Linguistics and Cultures, University of Manchester.

Prof. Al-Hassani is Founder and Chairman of the Foundation for Science, Technology and Civilisation (FSTC); a not-for-profit, non-religious and non-political body based in the UK but supported by academics from across the globe. The project has attracted the support of leading educators, scientists and politicians.

In 2006, he also launched '1001 Inventions' – a public engagement project, which works to highlight the cultural roots of present day civilisation. The contribution that Muslim and other cultures have made to the modern world has been widely overlooked. The project believes that the cultural origins of scientific and technological progress demonstrates the shared heritage of humanity, which can help societies appreciate their shared cultural and technological inheritance.

Such appreciation can make a significant contribution to interfaith dialogue, societal harmony, community cohesion and cultural convergence.

The British Science Association (formerly known as the British Association for the Advancement of Science) was established in 1831, and organises major initiatives across the UK, including the annual British Science Festival, National Science and Engineering Week, programmes of regional and local events, and an extensive programme for young people in schools and colleges.

The BSA works to promote openness about science in society and affirm science as a prime cultural force through engaging and inspiring adults and young people directly with science and technology, and their implications.

The British Science Association is a charity established under Royal Charter and governed by a Council which forms the Board of Trustees. It is managed by a professional staff, with around 30 people in the national office in London and 5 regional staff across the UK. The 16 scientific sections of the British Science Association, which contribute primarily to the annual British Science Festival, are run by committed volunteers. So too are the 30 or so branches, which organise events and activities locally across the UK.

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