

3 finalists in prize for technology breakthroughs

April 14 2010, By MATTI HUUHTANEN , Associated Press Writer

(AP) -- Three European inventors who helped create illuminated wallpapers, tiny fast processors in mobile phones, and cheap, high-performance cells used in solar panels are finalists in the euro1.1 million (\$1.5 million) international Millennium Technology Prize.

The winner, to be announced at a ceremony in Helsinki on June 9, will be awarded euro800,000 (\$1.1 million).

The two runners-up will each receive euro150,000 (\$204,000).

The Technology Academy of Finland, which announced the finalists on Wednesday, chose them from 55 people and 39 innovations.

Richard Friend from Britain was selected for inventions in optoelectronics that have enabled the production of electronic paper and cheap organic solar cells; Stephen Furber, also British, for designing microprocessors found in 98 percent of the world's cell phones; and Michael Graetzel from Switzerland for inventions of solar cells used in renewable energy technologies.

Friend, a professor of physics at Cambridge University, was cited for his work in plastic electronics "that has revolutionized the field of optoelectronics with far-reaching consequences for energy efficient applications in display devices, lighting, sensing and solar energy harvesting."

Professor Furber of the computer engineering department at the University of Manchester, Britain, was recognized for being the principal designer of the ARM 32 bit RISC microprocessor 25 years ago that "unlocked the world of consumer electronics ... benefiting hundreds of millions worldwide."

German-born chemist Graetzel, director of the photonics and interfaces laboratory at Ecole Polytechnique de Lausanne, in Lausanne, Switzerland, was lauded for inventing "dye-sensitized, low cost-high performance solar cells," which led to the development of electricity-generating windows and mobile solar panels.

The biennial Millennium Technology Prize was launched by the Finnish government and industry in 2004. It is given for achievements in energy and the environment, communications and information, new materials and processes as well as health care and life sciences.

The previous prize winner, in 2008, was American Professor Robert Langer from MIT for developing bio-materials used in combatting cancer and heart disease.

Other winners include Japanese Professor Shuji Nakamura for inventions in laser technology and LED lighting, and Tim Berners-Lee, the MIT scientist credited with inventing the World Wide Web.

More information: Millennium Prize: <http://www.millenniumprize.fi> .

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