Scientists win 'Asian Nobel Prize' for mapping the universe

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Three US scientists whose work helped map the universe are among the recipients of the one-million-US-dollar Shaw Prize, known as the "Asian Nobel," the competition's organisers said Thursday.

Princeton University professors Lyman Page and David Spergel and Charles Bennett of Johns Hopkins University, won the award for an experiment that helped to determine the "geometry, age and composition of the universe to unprecedented precision."

The trio will share the Shaw Prize's award for astronomy, with one-million-US-dollar prizes also awarded in the categories for mathematical sciences and life sciences and medicine.

The University of California's David Julius won the award for life sciences and medicine for his "seminal discoveries" of how the skin senses pain and temperature, the organisers' statement said.

"(Julius's) work has provided insights into fundamental mechanisms underlying the sense of touch as well as knowledge that opens the door to rational drug design for the treatment of chronic pain," the statement said.

Princeton's Jean Bourgain won an award for his "profound work" in mathematical sciences, it said.

The Shaw Prize, funded by Hong Kong film producer and philanthropist

Run Run Shaw and first awarded in 2004, honours exceptional contributions "to the advancement of civilization and the well-being of humankind."

The awards will be presented at a ceremony in Hong Kong on September 28.

Last year, two scientists whose work challenged the assumption that obesity is caused by a lack of will power won the life sciences and medicine category.

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