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STRIKING THE RIGHT NOTE: Zubin Mehta has won the Dan David award. (AFP Photo)

PARIS: Conductor Zubin Mehta, three American scientists and a historian and composer, both from France, have won awards each worth USD one million, France's culture minister said on Friday.

The Dan David awards, in their sixth year, go to nominees whose achievements have made a scientific, technological, cultural or social impact on the world in three categories: past, present and future. French Culture Minister Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres announced the winners.

Mehta and French composer Pascal Dusapin will share USD one million for their achievements in the "present" category. In a statement, the jury praised Mehta, who conducted the New York Philharmonic for 13 years, for his "flamboyant direction."

The "past" prize went to French historian Jacques Le Goff, author of more than 30 books on the Middle Ages.

The "future" prize was awarded to three American scientists: Dr James Hansen of New York's Goddard Institute of Space Studies and Dr Jerry Olson and Sarah Kurtz of the National Renewable Energy Laboratory in Golden, Colorado. Hansen won for what the jury called his exceptional work on climate change, while Olson and Kurtz were honoured for their research on solar power technology.

The awards are named after Israeli Dan David, a native of Romania who made his fortune inventing, patenting, developing and marketing photographic technologies, including automatic photo booths.

The prizes, which were announced in Paris, are funded by a USD 100 million endowment administered by Tel Aviv University. Winners can use USD 900,000 as

they please, but must give USD 100,000 away in grants to young researchers. The prizes will be handed out in at a ceremony at Paris' Garnier Palace, in May.