

Russian Billionaire Usmanov to Return Auctioned-Off Nobel Prize to American Geneticist

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Alisher Usmanov

Russian billionaire Alisher Usmanov will return a Nobel Prize medal he acquired during an auction in 2014 to its original recipient, U.S. geneticist James Watson, news agency TASS reported Tuesday.

Watson was awarded the Nobel Prize in medicine in 1962 jointly with Francis Crick and Maurice Wilkins for discovering the double helical structure of DNA.

In 2014, Watson decided to sell the medal and donate the proceeds to scientific research. Usmanov purchased the item for \$4.8 million during an auction at Christie's in New York in December, TASS reported at the time, citing Usmanov's press service. After the auction, he vowed to return it to Watson.

Watson is currently in Moscow, where he is expected to hold an open lecture at the Russian

Academy of Sciences (RAS) on Wednesday. The medal will be returned during a ceremony that will see the participation of RAS President Vladimir Fortov, the academy's press office told TASS.

"It is important for me that the money that I spent on this medal will go to supporting scientific research, and the medal will stay with the person who deserved it," Usmanov said after having acquired the medal, TASS reported. "I wouldn't like the medal of the distinguished scientist to be an object on sale," he added.

Later in his career, Watson devoted his research to cancer treatments. Usmanov, whose father died from the illness, praised the scientist's contribution to the field, TASS reported.

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