

Flying the FLAG

Salim and Quarraisha Abdool Karim scoop international award



World-renowned Durban scientists and infectious disease epidemiologists at the Centre for the AIDS Programme of Research in South Africa (Caprisa), professors Salim and Quarraisha Abdool Karim, were in January 2022 honoured in Vietnam as inaugural recipients of a VinFuture special prize for their groundbreaking research on HIV prevention in South Africa.

The couple was awarded the VinFuture Special Prize for innovators from developing countries at a ceremony held at the Hanoi Opera House in Vietnam on Thursday, 20 January 2022.

Guests included Vietnam Prime Minister, Pham Minh Chinh, and leaders of government ministries, ambassadors, Nobel laureates and the founders of the VinFuture prize.

The award programme is part of the VinFuture Foundation, an independent, non-profit organisation set up by Phạm Nhật Vượng, the first Vietnamese billionaire and founder

and Chairperson of the largest Vietnamese conglomerate, VinGroup Corporate, with his wife, Phạm Thu Hương, to create meaningful change in the lives of millions by recognising and rewarding transformative innovation in sci-tech.

Almost 600 nominations across 60 countries were received for the prize. Of these, nearly 100 were for the world's top 2% most-cited scientists, many of whom are themselves laureates of distinguished awards, including the Nobel Prize, Japan Prize and Tang Prize.

"The Abdool Karims have tirelessly championed the importance of science in defining the HIV and COVID-19 response," said Chair of the Caprisa Board, Bongwiwe Ntuli.

"South Africa is blessed to have such world-class scientists whose research is making the world a better place."

The couple said the 2022 prize for scientists in developing countries was "a beacon of recognition for the many scientists in the developing world who toil away each day in their laboratories, clinics and libraries, that

scientific excellence is achievable in the midst of adversity.

"While we serve as its recipients, this prize is recognition for the dedication and commitment to excellence by a team of more than 200 researchers in South Africa, with collaborators from five continents and thousands of volunteers who have participated in our studies over the past 33 years," they said.

The ceremony honoured the winners of the inaugural VinFuture prizes, including the US\$3 million (about R45 million) VinFuture grand prize and three US\$500 000 (about R7.5 million) special prizes for female innovators, innovators from developing countries and innovators with outstanding achievements in emerging fields.

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