

MEDICINE

Japan to honour Abdool Karim's work

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PROFESSORS Salim Abdool Karim and his wife, Quarraisha, are among the candidates to receive the Fourth Hideyo Noguchi Africa Prize from Japan for their work on HIV/Aids and Covid-19 in Africa.

The Japanese government made the announcement on Wednesday.

Dr Salim Abdool Karim is the director of the Centre for the Aids Programme of Research in South Africa (Caprisa) as well as professor of global health at the Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University, New York, and pro vice-chancellor (research) at the University of Kwa-Zulu-Natal.

Dr Quarraisha Abdool Karim is the associate scientific director of Caprisa, professor of epidemiology at the Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University, New York, and pro vice-chancellor (African health) at UKZN.

The cabinet statement from Japan said the Abdool Karims were being honoured for their global contributions to HIV/Aids prevention and treatment through scientifically rigorous research, for their role in training African scientists and for their steadfast scientific leadership in the response to Covid-19 in Africa.

"(They) deserve to be awarded the Fourth Hideyo Noguchi Africa Prize for medical research category for their groundbreaking research and scientific



PROFESSORS Quarraisha and Salim Abdool Karim. | MATTHEW HENNING

leadership in Africa over more than three decades," said the statement.

It said the duo had worked side-by-side in tackling devastating diseases while overcoming scientific and political obstacles.

"In their many achievements they embody the spirit of Hideyo Noguchi. At considerable professional risk, they confronted Aids denial, provided life-sparing antiviral treatments in defiance of government policy and

developed HIV prevention approaches that empower women to protect themselves.

"They established collaborative HIV research centres, working with international partners on vaccines,

immunopathogenesis research, microbicides and antiviral treatments."

The statement also noted the professors' rigorous work during the Sars-CoV-2 pandemic by undertaking rapid surveillance, promoting evidence-based prevention and combating misinformation on vaccines.

The final candidates for the award were selected by professor emeritus of the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies, Dr Kiyoshi Kurokawa, who is the Hideyo Noguchi Africa Prize (HNAP) committee chair.

Japanese prime minister Fumio Kishida made the final decision of the laureates based on the recommendation by the HNAP committee.

"The prize aims to honour individuals or organisations with outstanding achievements in the fields of medical research and medical services to combat infectious and other diseases in Africa, thus contributing to the health and welfare of the African people and of all humankind," said the statement.

The awards ceremony will be hosted by the prime minister during the 8th Tokyo International Conference on African Development which will be held in Tunisia on August 27 and 28.

The prize includes a citation and a medal for each laureate and an honorarium of 100 million yens (about \$1m or R16.75m) for each category from the government funds and private funding from national and international donations.