

HEALTH

World-renowned SA scientists honoured for research on HIV prevention

STAFF WRITER

WORLD-RENOWNED South African scientists and infectious disease epidemiologists Professors Salim and Quarraisha Abdool Karim have been honoured in Vietnam as one of the inaugural recipients of a VinFuture special prize for their ground-breaking research on HIV prevention.

The Abdool Karims' were awarded the VinFuture Special Prize for Innovators from Developing Countries at a special ceremony at the Hanoi Opera House in Vietnam last week.

The ceremony honoured the winners of the inaugural VinFuture Prizes, including the \$3 million (R45 mil-

lion) VinFuture Grand Prize and three \$500 000 (R7.5 million) Special Prizes for female innovators, innovators from developing countries, and innovators in emerging fields.

The VinFuture Grand Prize was awarded to Dr Katalin Kariko; Professor Drew Weissman and Professor Pieter R Cullis – the scientists behind mRNA technology for Covid-19 vaccines.

Infectious disease epidemiologists at the Centre for the Aids Programme of Research in SA (Caprisa), the Abdool Karims' have "tirelessly championed the importance of science in defining the HIV and Covid-19 response", said Caprisa Board chair Bongjwe Ntuli. "South Africa is blessed to have such

world-class scientists."

The Abdool Karims' said: "This prize is recognition for the many scientists in the developing world who toil each day in their laboratories, clinics, and libraries – that scientific excellence is achievable in the midst of adversity. This prize is recognition for the dedication to excellence by a team of over 200 researchers in South Africa and thousands of volunteers in our studies over the past 33 years."

Almost 600 nominations across 60 countries were received for the prize. VinFuture Prize Council Chair, Professor Sir Richard Friend, said the prize recognised truly outstanding scientific work that would positively impact billions of lives.