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# Ban warns of rising HIV infections

**NEW YORK:** United Nations secretary-general Ban Ki-moon warned on World AIDS Day that new infections are outpacing the gains from treating people with the HIV virus and millions of victims still experience widespread discrimination.

While the world was seeing signs of progress in reversing the AIDS epidemic, Ban said on Tuesday that more must be done urgently to reach the UN goal of providing universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support by next year.

"That means countering any form of HIV-related stigma and discrimination.

"It means eliminating violence against women and girls. It means ensuring access to HIV information and services."

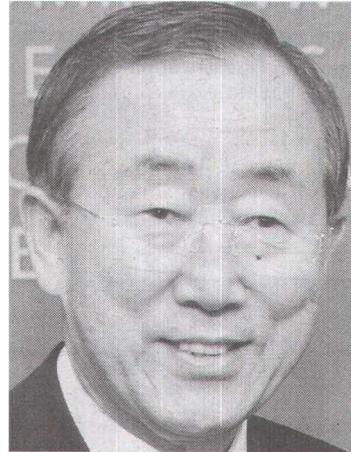
Ban urged all countries to remove punitive laws, policies and practices that hamper the response to AIDS, including travel restrictions against people living with HIV or AIDS.

He said many countries institutionalise discrimination against groups most at risk — sex workers, drug users and homosexual men — which "only fuels the epidemic and prevents cost-effective interventions".

According to UNAIDS, which coordinates the UN's efforts to respond to the epidemic, 80 countries penalised homosexuality.

The AIDS epidemic update released last week estimated that 33.4 million people were living with HIV worldwide, 2.7 million were newly infected this year and two million died of AIDS related illness this year.

Over the past eight years, new



United Nations secretary-general Ban Ki-moon says more must be done to counter HIV-related stigma and discrimination

HIV infections have been reduced by 17 per cent, and UNAIDS and the World Health Organisation estimate that some 2.9 million lives had been saved since effective treatment became available in 1996.

But while four million people are now getting AIDS drugs worldwide, a 10-fold jump in five years, five million others were still in dire need of the medicine, UN health officials said in a report in September.

At a commemoration of World AIDS Day attended by Ban, the lights on the historic Washington Square Park Memorial Arch at Greenwich Village here were turned off to remember those lost to AIDS, and turned back on to emphasise the importance of human rights for all those living with HIV or AIDS. — AP