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## Suu Kyi urges 'freedom from fear' on World AIDS Day

against complacency despite held on March 1, 2014. falling infection rates.

for democracy at the launch on devastation around the world". World AIDS Day of a new "zero in July.

"The fight against discrimination is an extension of our fight for freedom from fear," said the Myanmar opposition leader and democracy icon, using the title of a famous essay she wrote.

"My simple message as the countries. global ambassador for zero discrimination is it all starts in the mind and in the heart. There must be less calculation and more warmth, more love, more affection, more compassion.

"We must have our differences and we must recognise them, but these differences should be an opportunity for us to be more complete human beings.

Suu Kyi and UNAIDS director

Myanmar Nobel Michael Sidibe unveiled a new laureate Aung San Suu Kyi urged campaign yesterday targeting greater openness and compassion prejudice against HIV/AIDS in the global struggle against sufferers, with the world's first AIDS Sunday as experts warned Zero Discrimination Day to be

Sidibe said scientific Suu Kyi, the UNAIDS global breakthroughs and visionary advocate for HIV/AIDS victims, leadership meant there was now drew parallels between the plight an end in sight to "an epidemic of sufferers and her own struggle that has wrought such staggering

"But make no mistake, stigma, discrimination" campaign and a denial and complacency are still conference to be held in Australia among us, putting us in danger of failing the next generation," he

> The pair were speaking in Melbourne at the Australian launch of AIDS 2014, a major global health and policy conference to be held in the city in July with 14,000 delegates from almost 200

> Sharon Lewin, an infectious diseases professor and co-chair

> of AIDS 2014, said there had been substantial progress in the global response to HIV.

A total of 25 countries — many in sub-Saharan Africa — reported a 50 per cent reduction in new infectionslastyearduetoincreased availability of treatments.

But Lewin said there were still atrisk populations not seeking help

and places where new diagnoses were increasing, including in Australia where young men were having unprotected sex with men due to complacency about the

"In the '80s to the mid-90s, HIV was an incredibly scary prospect -no treatment, enormous stigma and discrimination, early death. Lewin told AFP of the disease which was first identified some 30 years ago.

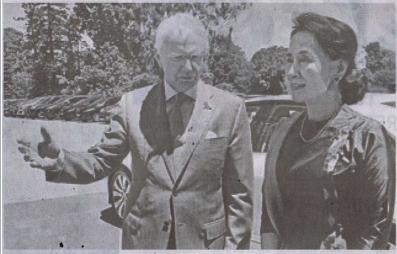
"It's not as scary any more but it's still a significant chronic illness that has a big impact on people's lives."

Last year 1.6 million people died from AIDS-related causes, down from 1.8 million in 2011 and 2.3 million in 2005, according to the United Nations.

In its annual report on the state of the global pandemic released in September, UNAIDS said new HIV infections had plummeted by a third overall since 2001 and more than halved among children.

But Lewin said the world was at a crossroads with HIV.

"We have come so far and there have been so many successes," she said. "But still there are so many challenges, the biggest being that we know what works, but yet we still can't broadly implement it." - AFP



ADVOCATE FOR AIDS VICTIMS: Victorian Governor Alex Chernov welcomes Suu Kyi as she arrives at a World AIDS Day function at Government House in Melbourne. — AFP