AIDS becomes China's Biggest Killer Disease

Over 34,000 people have died of Aids since the first case reported in 1985

Beijing: Aids was the top killer among infectious diseases in China for the first time last year, with 6,897 people dying from the virus in the nine months through September, a state news agency reports.

The number of confirmed HIV infections also rose from 1,35,630 in 2005 to 2,64,302 from January to September 2008, Xinhua News agency said, citing the Ministry of Health. The government and UN Aids estimate the number of people living with HIV in China is actually about 7,00,000, much higher than the confirmed number of infections, in part because people are reluctant to be tested. The government estimates that 85,000 of those have full blown Aids.

Aids was previously the third deadliest infectious disease in China; it is now followed by tuberculosis, rabies, hepatitis and infant’s tetanus, the Xinhua report late Tuesday said.

The government says 34,864 people have died of Aids since it reported its first death from the disease in 1985. China denied for years that Aids was a problem, but leaders have shifted gears in recent years, confronting the disease more openly and promising anonymous testing, free treatment for the poor and a ban on discrimination against people with the virus.
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Aids gained a foothold in China largely due to unsanitary blood plasma buying schemes and tainted transfusions in hospitals.

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