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Chinese HIV-positive man files discrimination suit

BEIJING: An HIV-positive man in China said yesterday he was suing local authorities for denying him a job as a primary school teacher, in a sign of growing assertiveness in the nation's AIDS community.

If accepted by the court, the lawsuit will be the second such discrimination case heard in China, where people with HIV/AIDS are often stigmatised despite growing signs of openness.

The 27-year-old plaintiff, who goes by the alias Xiao Hai, told AFP he passed a test and interview for a teaching job in the southwestern province of Guizhou in April, but was denied the post after a health check.

"Authorities told me they couldn't employ me

because the results showed I was HIV-positive," he said, adding he had filed a lawsuit Wednesday against human resources authorities in Sandu Shui Autonomous County.

According to the state-run Global Times newspaper, his lawyer Chen Wensheng has asked the court to repeal the rejection of Xiao Hai, which he argues is illegal and represents job discrimination.

He said the rejection on health grounds broke the 2008 Law on Prevention and Treatment of Infectious Diseases and other regulations that bar employers from discriminating against patients with HIV — the virus that causes AIDS.

The lawsuit — which

has yet to be accepted by the court — is similar to a landmark case heard last year in the eastern province of Anhui and widely believed to be China's first HIV discrimination case.

The plaintiff in the case, heard in October, also sued local authorities for allegedly denying him a job because he was HIV-positive, but lost the suit.

HIV/AIDS sufferers have long been stigmatised in China, but increased government education and a recent motion picture starring movie star Zhang Ziyi as an HIV carrier have helped raise awareness.

China says that at least 740,000 people are living with HIV but campaigners say the actual figure could be far higher. — AFP