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HIV positive girl back to studies

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A 20-year-old HIV positive girl, who was ostracised and forced to leave her hostel after she opened up about her condition, is back to her college in north Kerala's Kannur district, thanks to the intervention of District Collector.

The first-year graduation student of a private college in Kannur had decided to leave the management hostel last month, where she had been put up as some of her fellow mates and their parents objected to her stay there after she revealed her HIV positive status.

College principal P A Junaid said the issue became public after the management sought another accommodation for her as some of her fellow hostel mates vacated the rooms.

Hearing the girl's plight, Kannur District Collector, P Balakiran stepped in to help her.

An awareness campaign was carried out among students and parents yesterday after which she was admitted to the hostel today.

The Collector said he had held many rounds of talks with the girl, college management representatives and even organised an awareness class for other students and parents with the support of health officials.

"I am happy that the issue has been solved and she has gone back to the hostel. The college authorities were very supportive throughout. Now other students and their parents are also convinced," Balakiran told PTI.

To clear the doubts of students and parents over HIV, the Collector organised an awareness campaign as part of which district health department officials went to the hostel and took four hours-long class yesterday.

"They (students and parents) asked the doctors many doubts about the disease. The health experts gave them convincing answers. Thus the issue was settled and the student is now back in her hostel and studies," he said.

The Collector also said he planned to extend the drive throughout the district to end the social stigma attached to the disease.

The principal said the student was given all support since the beginning and all efforts were made to convince the students and parents.

"Initially, it was very difficult to convince them as many firmly believed that their children would contract HIV if they stay with her," he told PTI.

The Collector's intervention and the awareness class had helped change their mindset later, he added.

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