

# BITS gets research grant for developing anti-HIV drug

Special Correspondent

**JAIPUR:** A research team of scientists at the Hyderabad campus of Pilani-based Birla Institute of Technology and Science (BITS) has received a global research grant for developing an anti-human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) drug for treatment of AIDS patients. BITS is among four universities around the world selected for support by a trilateral programme.

The Support Programme for Scientific and Technological Cooperation will provide the grant as part of a trilateral agreement among India, Brazil and South Africa funded by India's Central Department of Science and Technology. The research team has been working in the drug discovery area for quite some time.

A BITS release here on Saturday said Prof. Sriram and Prof. P. Yogeewari of the Hyderabad campus had contributed to the drug design and other cutting edge activities in the creation of the "revolutionary anti-HIV drug". The project aims at coordinating the expertise of the three research groups in drug design, synthesis, natural product-based design and bio-chemistry to come up with the anti-HIV drug.

The project was initiated through an invitation by the South African research team which coordinated with Brazilian scientists to apply for possible funding.

The release quoted BITS Vice-Chancellor B. N. Jain as saying that research on an anti-HIV drug would help arrest the AIDS epidemic. "Our fac-

ulty members have been recognised for their expertise and knowledge through this research grant. BITS is involved in cutting edge research and innovation both independently and with industry support," said Prof. Jain.

As part of the initiative, the scientists at BITS are also simultaneously collaborating in the fields of medicinal chemistry and biochemistry with the research groups of the Federal University of Para, Brazil, and University of Kwa Zulu Natal, South Africa. The research group will also work closely towards a long-term productive task extending beyond their three-year grant period. The release said that after the successful grant application, the group aims at demonstrating proof of the

concept so as to attract more substantial funding based on the results obtained by the end of the term.

AIDS has become a major global epidemic since it was first recognised as a disease in the early 1980s. It has claimed millions of lives, while about 40 million people are estimated to be currently infected with HIV virus, the causative agent of AIDS.

BITS is an all-India institution declared a deemed university under Section 3 of the University Grants Commission Act, 1956. Apart from its main campus at Pilani in Jhunjhunu district of Rajasthan, BITS has campuses in Hyderabad, Goa and Dubai, offering courses in various disciplines of science, technology, pharmacy and management.