

# Oz, India to collaborate to improve sugarcane varieties

**Melbourne, April 29 (PTI):** Indian and Australian scientists will be conduct joint research to help accelerate gains in sugarcane breeding and variety development.

The project will identify genetic markers for cane yield, sugar content, drought tolerance and red rot resistance in sugarcane varieties, using sophisticated biotechnology. The project is an outcome of a new grant that was recently announced as part of the Commonwealth Government's Australia-India Strategic Research Fund (AISRF). "The grant allowed for a partnership between Sugar Research Australia (SRA) and the Sugarcane Breeding Institute in Coim-



batore, India," said SRA CEO Neil Fisher.

"Establishing partnerships with leading sugarcane breeding institutions overseas is a critical aspect of continuing to improve the Australian sugarcane variety development programme which is run by SRA," Fisher said. "India is the second largest producer of raw sugar in the world and is an impor-

tant country for Australia to collaborate with. This research partnership has enormous potential for both countries."

It builds on previous investment made by the Australian sugar industry in developing this technology jointly by SRA, CSIRO, and Syngenta. "The results will be used to determine ways to accelerate gains in sugarcane breeding, as well start mutually beneficial cooperation for sugarcane improvement," Fisher said.

"The SRA breeding programme is SRA's largest area of investment on behalf of our investors. Projects such as this fit into a much broader spectrum of research looking

for continued improvement in sugarcane breeding, and ultimately for the delivery of improved varieties for growers and millers.

"Use of cutting edge technologies will help our researchers explore new ground in improving sugarcane varieties," Fisher added. The AISRF helps Australian researchers to participate with Indian scientists in leading-edge scientific research and workshops.

The AISRF is Australia's largest fund dedicated to bilateral research with any country and one of India's largest sources of support for international science. The project is being awarded A\$ 644,000 through AISRF. *PTI*