

## **Universities help to enhance cross-border peace and integration**

**: Prof. Lama**

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“Border areas are sensitive regions that are constantly under threat, but they are also zones that provide an opportunity for cooperation, global peace building and sustainable security. New concepts of security are fast emerging, by bringing citizens to a central focus. In India, 17 out of 29 states share borders with other countries, some even have 4 international borders. The north-east of India is one such region that shares maximum borders with other countries. It is through this part, that the country can promote cooperation and integration with its neighbours. One way in which this can be achieved is by involvement of educational institutions in this region of the country” explained Prof. Mahendra P. Lama - Professor of South Asian Economics, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University and former pro-Vice Chancellor of IGNOU; during his lecture on **“Borders, Human Security and Peace Building - Role of Universities”**. The Lecture cum Interactive Session, part of The ICG Lecture Series by Eminent Persons organised by The International Centre Goa and Department of Political Science - Goa University was recently held at Goa University.

As Founding Vice Chancellor, Prof. Lama illustrated the crucial role that Sikkim University played in enhancing cross border integration. In a short span of time, it succeeded in bringing together communities and governments through its non-conventional programmes in disciplines such as migration, irrigation, disaster management and folk studies.

“In 2006, the university did what governments could not do for decades,” Prof. Lama contemplated “ it was instrumental in re-opening the Nathu La Pass, the ancient trade route between India and Tibet that was shut after the Indo-Sino war. Besides, the university is also involved in collaborative projects on issues such as global warming and their impact on the himalayan ecology and has organised various cross border dialogues with their own funding”. Prof. Lama explained “this was only possible because teachers and students took up the challenge and moved out of the classroom to work with the local community”.

Quoting the landmark achievements of Sikkim University, Prof. Lama concluded “ in an endeavour to encourage peace building along border areas; it is very important to take advantage of the north-east's proximity and build more educational institutions, so as to be able to integrate with neighbouring countries.”