

## PM bats for preserving Himalayan biodiversity

**Pant Nagar (Uttarakhand), June 19:** With alien species threatening the delicate balance in Himalayas, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Saturday stressed on conserving the endemic fauna of the fragile ecosystem in upper reaches of Uttarakhand and promoting traditional crops.

"The Himalayas need to be saved from the invasion of exotic species (non-native species). Their biodiversity, most of which is endemic, should be allowed to flourish in its original habitats," Singh said in his convocation address at

the GB Pant University here.

Pointing to the state's fragile eco-system, he stressed on a special and sensitive approach towards agricultural development which focuses on preserving the ecosystem and also respects the social and cultural traditions of the people.

In mountain areas, traditional crops still form a significant part of the agricultural practices possessing unique characteristics such as resistance against pests and drought conditions, better palatability, aroma and medicinal properties, and should be protected and promoted, he added.

"Cultivation of a base crop along with a dozens of inter-cultured crops is also a unique characteristic of hill agriculture. It is a wonderful example of preservation of bio-diversity and minimisation of risk," Singh said.

He further noted that such traditional systems need special attention in our Research and Development efforts and adequate attention must be paid to these areas.