

'Lack of industries a boon'

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Guwahati: Ranjit Barthakur, investment adviser to CM Tarun Gogoi, believes that the lack of industries in the state is a boon rather than a bane. "The state's natural bounty can become the engine of growth and well make up for the lack of industries," he said

"Assam may have missed the industry bus, but not the nature bus. In fact, the lack of industries has the state in an advantageous position for nature-related business in a sustainable way," said Barthakur, the man known for his 'naturenomics' concept.

Naturenomics advocates creation of wealth for community without damaging the nature.

Barthakur said that he had suggested the Assam government to prioritize nature policy that works for economic development and retains the ecology.

As a demonstration of the na-

turenomics concept, the Balipra Tract and Frontier Foundation (BTFF), has taken up sustainable development through organic cultivation and eco-tourism with the involvement of local communities in Balipara of Sonitpur district.

Many prominent persons including ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to In-

PROMOTING NATURENOMICS

dia, Bernd Mutzelburg, have spent vacations in the exotic Baligaon, a nondescript Mishing village, a 10-km drive from Balipara. Barthakur is the co-founder and trustee of BTFF, which pioneered heritage tourism by transforming more than a century-old tea garden bungalows into tourist accommodation centres in Balipara.

He said an investment roadmap on opportunity and development

in the North-East is expected to be released by PM Manmohan Singh and Tata CMD, Ratan Tata in July.

"We have also suggested the chief minister to form an investment advisory committee with leading industrialists as its members," Barthakur said, adding that absence of big industries in the state has made it possible to explore nature-based industries that do not destroy the ecology.

Rural and eco-tourism have proved to be a big source of income generation for rural folks, comprising about eight communities, BTFF managing trustee Prabir Banerjea said. On an experimental basis, BTFF has identified 10 houses in the area to start its 'Ghor-Bari' project under which house-owners would be assisted in floriculture and apiary. "We will not only assist the communities with technological and financial inputs but will also buy the products from them," Banerjea added.