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learned Additional Solicitor General, appearing for The Union Territory of Andaman & Nicobar Islands on instructions informed the Court that there is no social forestry in Andaman & Nicobar Islands. The wood which is being cut is from the natural forest and plantation of teak etc. has taken place in the forest, which had been worked and approximating 40,000 cubic metres of wood is cut from the forest annually for the purposes of the small mills the total logging of wood being approximately 1,30,000 cubic metres per year. In the last two years, this figure has come down but the fact remains that instead of resorting to social forestry and thereby providing employment to the people in growing forest at the present moment the natural forests are being cut and the timber sawn.

Andaman & Nicobar Islands is one of the hot spots and is in the eco-fragile area and has, therefore, the eco-diversity thereby has to be preserved. For this, it is essential that the natural forest is protected and re-generation allowed to take place.

We are also informed that the existing saw-mills have a subsisting licence valid till 30th March, 2003. The saw-mills and the other wood-based industries in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands are not permitted to cut the trees and supplies to them are made only by the Government itself or through its Corporation. Some of these saw-mills and industries have logs of wood and sawn timber in their stock. It would therefore be iniquitous to deprive them of an opportunity to utilise the stock for which payment has been made to the Government for the purchase of wood. However, it is to be borne in mind that fresh logging of wood must cease immediately.

After taking all facts and circumstances into consideration, we issue the following directions:

- (1) All felling of trees from the forest of little Andaman Islands, the national park and sanctuaries, the tribal reserves and all other areas shall stand suspended.
- (2) For the areas in which there are working plans, the Government through the Chief Secretary shall disclose on an affidavit -
 - (i) The extent of felling and re-generation permitted under these working plans during the last 10 years.
 - (ii) The compliance with re-generation/re-planatation/re-forestation targets under the working plans and reasons if any for the shortfall.
- (3) The working plan of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands should be re-worked on the basis as was applied to the State of M.P. and others, namely that before any felling of trees, there should first be compulsory afforestation/re-generation, the felling permissions would be based upon the extent of re-generation of forest undertaken and not the other way round.
- (4) No felling of tree (under the working plan or otherwise) shall be permitted for meeting any raw material requirements of the plywood, veneer, black board, match