

in these islands for the last 120 years the islands' forests cover 92% of the land area of which a total land area of 87% is covered by dense forests with over 40% canopy density. This speaks for itself and for the conservative and sustainable manner in which the forests have been worked.

7. That, fourthly, the Administration respectfully informs that till 1988, in accordance with the National Forest Policy, 1952, one of the objectives of forestry, in the area set aside for multiple use, was to increase the economic value of the forest by increasing the proportion of the species that are useful for the people and to meet their growing need and demand. With effect from 1988, the emphasis has shifted to conservation of biodiversity and the industries are required to meet their own needs from outside the forest area. In order to attain these objectives, many of the earlier practices of forestry working have been modified, for instance, the actual harvest has been reduced to 50% of the estimated silvicultural yield. Annual silvicultural yield placed at 1.15 lakh cum has been reduced to 70,000 cum from 1995 and in 2001, the annual harvest was 40,000 cum only. Further, girdling of the species of lesser economic value has been totally discontinued. Thus, the state of the forests in terms of forest type or species composition remains more or less near natural state due to the current forestry practices followed by the Administration.

8. That, fifthly, the Administration further submits that the objectives and practice of forest and ecosystem management in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands conform to the Working Plans approved by the Government of India, National Forest