

practice of commercial forestry is a threat to biodiversity rich forests is perhaps not based on correct appreciation of facts and current situation obtaining in the islands. The statement that "The forests of Andamans have been systematically converted from natural, biodiversity rich, forests to commercial "plantations" primarily to meet the raw material demands of the four medium sized wood based industries that were established in the islands" is wholly untrue; as may be ascertained from the fact that  $2/3^{\text{rd}}$  of the forests are wholly protected where no activity of any kind is undertaken and the balance  $1/3^{\text{rd}}$  of the area of forests is managed under established Standard Silvicultural Systems (Canopy lifting shelter wood system acknowledged globally). Timber harvest is regulated as per silvicultural requirements rather than based on raw material needs of the industries as alleged. It is reiterated that the Forest Management practices have immensely contributed to the conservation and wise use of the forests biodiversity resources of the islands contributing to the social, economic, industrial advancement of the islands and providing income and livelihood to a substantial proportion of the population of the islands. The statement that forestry sector working has had adverse effect on the island ecology, needs to be critically examined on a de novo basis, by a group of experts. Threat to the forests, if any, is only due to encroachment on account of the growing population and to a limited extent by migration from mainland. Renewed efforts are being made to secure better protection of the forests, coastal and marine ecosystems in future,

47. Now therefore, the Administration, submits that it stands committed to implementing the orders of the Hon'ble Court,