

[16 May, 2006]

RAJYA SABHA

- * 99 Vehicles have been seized on account of evasion of customs duty by way of mis-declaration of the year of manufacture or model number of such vehicles.

In 57 cases, the adjudication proceedings under the Customs Act, 1962 have been concluded and an amount of Rs. 1.54 crores imposed as fine in lieu of confiscation of the cars. An amount of Rs. 62 lakhs has been recovered so far. The remaining cases are at different stages of investigation/adjudication.

(c) In order to check duty evasion by means of fraudulent availment of concessional rate of duty under the EPCG Scheme, the DGFT has taken steps to tighten the eligibility and entitlement conditions for import of vehicles under the EPCG Scheme, by way of a Notification dt. 17th January, 2006. These steps are:

- i. The number of vehicles which can be imported by a firm has been restricted in such a manner that the "duty saved amount" on all such EPCG licenses issued to that firm in a particular year shall not exceed 50% of the average foreign exchange earnings from the hotel, travel, tourism and golf sectors in the preceding three licensing years;
- ii. Only those service providers shall be eligible for importing a vehicle under the EPCG Scheme which have a minimum of Rs. 1.5 crore foreign exchange earnings from the hotel, travel, tourism and golf sectors only, in the current and preceding three licensing years.

As regards cases where duty is sought to be evaded by misdeclaring the year of manufacture of the car, the field formations have been alerted to remain vigilant. The assistance of forensic experts is being taken to detect any tampering in the vehicle's chassis number and engine number.

Setting up of a National Heritage Sites Commission

*460.SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to set up a National Heritage Sites Commission to tender advice on heritage matters;

(b) whether this decision was taken in view of the inadequacies in the present legal and institutional framework to address the documentation and conservation of built heritage in its broadest outline;

(c) if so, what are the other main objectives of this proposed commission; and

(d) by what time commission is likely to start functioning?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The present legal framework is largely related to protected monuments under the care of the Archaeological Survey of India whereas the Commission has been conceptualized to deal with built heritage in its entirety.

(c) the proposed broad objectives of the Commission would, *inter alia*, include:

1. Advising the Government on short and long term policies in respect of preservation, conservation and management of heritage sites.
2. Laying down guidelines for implementing conservation and management plans of heritage sites.
3. Commission studies/investigation for identification and listing of heritage sites.
4. Present reports to Government on matters related to conservation of heritage sites.
5. Suggest amendments to heritage legislation.
6. Tender advice to Government on any matter referred to the Commission.

(d) It is not possible to indicate a definite time frame.