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Title: Personal explanation made by Dr. Shashi Tharoor regarding role in Recent Issues relating to IPL Kochi Cricket Team.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (DR. SHASHI THAROOR): Madam Speaker, I am grateful to you for the opportunity to set the record straight on my role in the recent issues relating to the IPL Kochi cricket team, which have been raised by the hon. Members of the Opposition....(*Interruptions*) The Indian Premier League, or IPL, recently auctioned two additional city franchises under the auspices of the Board of Control for Cricket in India, BCCI. ...(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker, if you prefer, I can lay it on the Table of the House

MADAM SPEAKER: Hon. Minister, you can lay rest of your Statement on the Table of the House.

\*DR. SHASHI THAROOR: As a passionate cricket fan since my childhood in Mumbai, and as an MP from Kerala, I have nurtured a desire to see the sport flourish in my home state.

A consortium led by Rendezvous Sports World was set up to bid for an IPL team. They approached me for help and guidance and steered them towards Kerala. My role was as an informal mentor to the group. I had no role whatsoever in setting up the consortium itself or in any of its business decisions, including its decision to bid for the franchise.

The consortium won its bid successfully, in an auction process conducted by the BCCI. Its victory has been widely hailed in Kerala as a triumph for the State and an unrivalled opportunity for young players and cricket-lovers to enjoy the benefits of direct participation in a world-class tournament through a Kerala team.

However, the unexpected success of the Kerala consortium was apparently not acceptable to some interested parties. This has led to a number of public

insinuations about the composition and ownership of the consortium, and of my role in it. Two serious allegations have been made against me: that my involvement in mentoring the group was inappropriate, that I misused my public office to help the consortium win the bid, and that I received benefits for so doing, in the form of "sweat equity" given by Rendezvous to its associates. I should like to address these allegations in turn.

First, my role in mentoring the Kerala consortium was throughout within the bounds of appropriate conduct for a Member of Parliament from Thiruvananthapuram and a member of the Union Council of Ministers. No misuse of my official position was involved. The issue has nothing to do with my Ministry. As a Minister, I was in no position to influence the bid process, let alone its outcome. I did not grant any favours or benefits within the purview of my Ministry to the members of the consortium. No one could have any idea what the various participants in the auction process would bid, and my official position gave me no advantage in this regard that could have been used to benefit the Kerala bid. Indeed my ministerial position was altogether irrelevant to the bid and so could not have been used or misused to ensure its success.

Second, it has been suggested that I have indirectly received personal benefits from this enterprise because the Rendezvous management team, who hold stakes in the venture, includes a close friend of mine. This allegation is particularly wounding because I have had a three-decade career in international public service that has never been sullied by the slightest taint of financial wrongdoing. Those who know me are aware that money has never been a motivating factor for me in any of my actions or decisions.

Rendezvous has clarified that it issued "sweat equity" to its associates in lieu of a salary, which is a common practice around the world for start-up ventures. No money has changed hands and associates are expected to earn equity by promoting Rendezvous' activities over the next ten years. In other words, whatever benefits might accrue to the "sweat equity" associates in the future depends on their work for Rendezvous and has nothing to do with me. It is an arrangement internal to the consortium and between the investors and Rendezvous. The notion that somebody is some sort of "proxy" for me is frankly insulting to me and to the professionalism and business ethics of the investors and their associates, particularly since I could not have any role in influencing the final outcome of a sealed bidding process. Madam Speaker, it is unworthy of any Member of this august House to imply that a reputed business professional and entrepreneur with a long track record of business success can, because of her gender, only be seen as a front-for someone else.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to have helped the consortium come to Kerala, a State which has long been excluded from participation in India's cricketing resurgence. I have neither invested nor received a rupee for my mentorship of the team. Irrespective of my personal relationships with any of the consortium members, I have not benefited, and do not intend to benefit, in any way financially from my association with the team now or at a later stage.

Madam Speaker, it is essential in our democracy that institutions of interest to the general public are run openly, rather than restricting their opportunities to a favoured few. For India to change and prosper, it must be an India for all Indians, not one where a few rich and powerful individuals can dominate all activities of interest to them. Cricket is now our most popular national pastime, attracting a following of crores. The game and the benefits accruing from it should not be retained only by an influential coterie with interests in a few privileged centres.

A Kerala IPL team is a dream of many young people and cricket lovers of all ages in and from the State. It has the potential to bring great material and psychological benefits to Kerala's economy and society. The unethical efforts that have been made to thwart the Kerala franchise are disgraceful. They are also dangerous to the health and credibility of a sport that has captured the passions and the loyalty of a majority of Indians. Indeed, such behaviour brings the IPL itself into disrepute.

It has been clear for some time that the real motive behind the public controversy that has been created around me is to make the Kochi team unviable and to assign this IPL franchise elsewhere than Kerala. I believe all fair-minded Indians would hope that such tactics will not be allowed to prevail. The allegations against me which have been seized upon by hon. Members of the Opposition are baseless, ill-founded and ill-motivated. I trust, Madam Speaker, that I have clarified my position to the satisfaction of this august House.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

(Placed in Library, See No. LT 2102/15/10)

...(Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: The House stands adjourned to meet again at 2 p.m.

**12.07½ hrs.**

*The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Fourteen of the Clock.*

**14.00 hrs.**

*The Lok Sabha re-assembled at Fourteen of the Clock.*

(Mr. Deputy Speaker *in the Chair*)

â€¦(व्यवधान)

**14.0¼ hrs.**

*(At this stage, Shri Shailendra kumar and some other hon. Members came and stood on the floor near the Table.)*

â€¦(व्यवधान)

उपाध्यक्ष महोदय : आप अपनी सीट पर चले जाइए।

â€¦(व्यवधान)

उपाध्यक्ष महोदय : आप सीट पर जा कर बैठ जाएं और सदन की कार्यवाही चलने दीजिए।

वेदः(व्यवधान)

उपाध्यक्ष महोदय : आप कृपया बैठ जाएं। माननीय संसदीय कार्य मंत्री आपसे कुछ कहना चाहते हैं।

वेदः(व्यवधान)

उपाध्यक्ष महोदय : मंत्री जी आपसे कुछ कहना चाहते हैं। आप मंत्री जी की बात सुन लीजिए।

वेदः(व्यवधान)

उपाध्यक्ष महोदय : आप शांत रहिए और मंत्री जी की बात सुनिए।

वेदः(व्यवधान)

संसदीय कार्य मंत्री और जल संसाधन मंत्री (श्री पवन कुमार बंसल): मैंने सुबह सबसे पहले कहा था कि ओपोजिशन का अधिकार है और फर्ज भी है कि अगर वे किसी बात को महसूस करते हैं, तो उसे सदन में उठाना चाहिए। लेकिन मैं समझता हूँ कि अगर यहां से एक स्टेटमेंट दी जा रही थी, तो उस स्टेटमेंट को सुनना चाहिए था। उस स्टेटमेंट को सुना नहीं गया। सदन में शोर होता रहा और सदन की कार्यवाही नहीं चल सकी। आज प्राइवेट मेम्बर बिजनेस है। प्राइवेट मेम्बर बिजनेस को सभी लोग, खास तौर से जिन लोगों ने उस पर काम किया होता है, वे अपने विचार सभा पटल पर रखना चाहते हैं। मुझे नहीं पता कि किस कारण they do not want even the Private Members' Business to be taken up. They did not want the Question Hour to be taken up. Would they want the Parliament to be run at all or not? Do they want the relevance and the sanctity of the Parliament to be maintained or not? What are we doing of democracy here? Is this the way the House is to be conducted?

My request to them would be that a statement has been made, let them read the statement. Some matters can be raised. What is this? They decide something on their own and entirely for narrow political considerations they want to mislead the people in the country. They do not want the Parliament to be run. They are hijacking the Parliament. They are holding the entire House to ransom. Is this the way things have to be done? ... (व्यवधान)

उपाध्यक्ष महोदय : आप लोग कृपया अपनी सीट पर चले जाइए।

वेदः(व्यवधान)

उपाध्यक्ष महोदय : आप लोगों ने जो बात कहनी थी, वह कह दी है। अब आप शांत हो जाइए और अपनी सीट पर चले जाइए।

वेदः(व्यवधान)

उपाध्यक्ष महोदय : सरकार ने आपकी बात सुन ली है। निर्णय लेना सरकार का काम है, आप बैठ जाएं।

वेदः(व्यवधान)

श्री पवन कुमार बंसल : महोदय, मैं माननीय सदस्यों से यही दर्खास्त कर रहा हूँ कि सदन की कार्यवाही चलने दें। लोगों ने हमें यहां चुनकर किसी जिम्मेदारी के लिए भेजा है। हम उस जिम्मेदारी का निर्वहन करें। हमें वह काम करना चाहिए, जिसके लिए हमें यहां जनता ने चुनकर भेजा है।... (व्यवधान)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: The House stands adjourned to meet on Monday, the 19<sup>th</sup> April 2010 at 11 a.m.

**14.04 hrs.**

**The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock**

*on Monday, April 19, 2010/Chaitra 29, 1932 (Saka).*

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\* The sign + marked above the name of a Member indicates that the Question was actually asked on the floor of the House by that Member.

\* Not recorded

\* The Report was presented to hon. Chairman, Rajya Sabha on 26 March, 2010 and was forwarded to hon. Speaker, Lok Sabha the same day.

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\* Laid on the Table

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