

Title: Dr. Shashi Tharoor made a statement in explanation of his resignation from the office of Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs.

DR. SHASHI THAROOR (THIRUVANANTHAPURAM): Madam Speaker, I rise to explain to you and to Members of this august House my resignation from the Union Council of Ministers.

As a loyal public servant, I am conscious that the controversy over my role in the IPL issue was distracting Parliament from far more important business.

As I explained in my statement to the Lok Sabha on Friday—which I attempted to deliver in the Lok Sabha on Friday—and reiterated to the Prime Minister on Sunday, my conscience is clear and I know that I have done nothing improper or unethical, let alone illegal. Nonetheless, in view of the ongoing political controversy, I have no desire to be an embarrassment to the Government and believe that my departure at this stage will allow the Prime Minister and his Cabinet colleagues to focus on the great challenges facing our nation. Such a step is in the highest moral traditions of our democratic system and in keeping with the standards that I am sure we would all wish to uphold in our nation's public life.

I welcome the fact that this august House, of which the voters of Thiruvananthapuram have made me a proud Member, has now moved on from the disruption we witnessed on Friday to address the important issues which await its consideration, and to take the crucial decisions needed to promote the well-being of the wonderful people of our great country.

Madam Speaker, I am new to Indian politics but I have a long record of public service, unblemished by the slightest taint of financial irregularity. I am deeply wounded by the fanciful and malicious charges that have been made against me and I have requested the Prime Minister to have these charges against me thoroughly investigated. I have led a life of personal integrity and probity and it is important to me that my name is cleared.

Madam Speaker, I returned to India after long years of international service because I had always cherished the desire to make a difference in my own country. Growing up in India and then looking at it from abroad, I could see how much there is to be proud of in our land, and how much the Indian people deserve the best efforts of all who aspire to lead our great democracy. I returned to India because I believe in an India of honesty and hard work, not of corruption and crookedness. I believe in an India of openness and straightforwardness, not of hypocrisy and double-dealing. I believe in an India where opportunities are available to all and not just to a chosen few. I believe in an India of pluralism and diversity, not of religious bigotry and caste politics. I believe in an India that is secure in itself and confident of its place in the world, an India that is a proud example of tolerance, freedom and hope for the downtrodden. That India will only be built by the sincere efforts of all of us in this august House and outside it.

This is the vision with which the voters of Thiruvananthapuram sent me to sit in your midst. I am proud to represent the capital of Kerala, a State that in so many ways is a trailblazer for India's progress, though in other respects it seems to have been left behind in the race for 21<sup>st</sup> century development. The Keralite ethos, with its cultural unity amidst religious diversity, its high educational standards and respect for democracy, its commitment to the empowerment of women and the well-being of the poor, embodies the best of India. As our great poet Vallathol wrote, "*Bharatam ennu ketala, abhimaana-pooritham aavanum, antarangam; Keralam ennu ketalo, thilakkanam choara nammuke njerambagalil.*" (When you hear the name of India, your heart must swell with pride; when you hear the name of Kerala, the blood must throb in your veins.) Madam Speaker, my heart swells with pride for India, and Keralite blood throbs in my veins.

I should like to reiterate that it has been a great privilege for me to serve the Indian National Congress Party and the Government of India. I shall always be grateful to the Honourable Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, and the Chairperson of the United Progressive Alliance and the leader of my party, Smt. Sonia Gandhi, for the opportunity they have given me to be of service to the country. They have been two of the finest of that select band of great men and women who have dedicated their lives for the service of the people of our nation.

I have great confidence that under their leadership, the country is in good hands and the Indian people can look forward to increasing security and prosperity in a troubled world. I should like to reiterate that it has been a great privilege for me to serve my Party and to have served the Government.

Today marks a new beginning for me and I am heartened by the love, friendship and loyalty I have received from countless numbers of well-wishers, in Thiruvananthapuram, across my home State of Kerala and throughout our great country. I am grateful for their support and encouragement and I am determined to continue to do my best for India and for the ideals that brought me back here.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

