

The Hindu (English), Dated: 25.02.2025

# USAID: Cong., BJP take swipe at each other

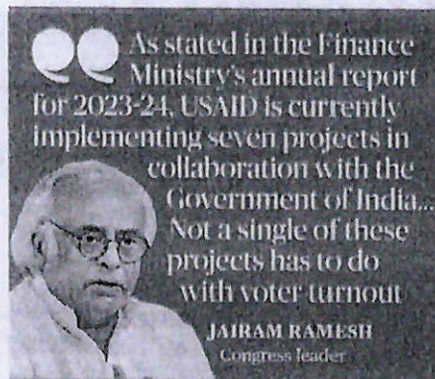
Opposition party cites Finance Ministry report to say none of the seven USAID projects being implemented is related to voter turnout, while ruling party says the former is trying to deflect blame, adds that India's governance will not be dictated by foreign agents masquerading as benefactors

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

**T**he Bharatiya Janata Party on Monday again targeted the Congress over the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funding issue, saying the party and its "ecosystem" were "desperate" to deflect blame.

The Congress, however, said the USAID was currently implementing seven projects in collaboration with the Union government, and none were related to voter turnout, as per a report from the Finance Ministry.

The BJP's Information Technology Cell head, Amit Malviya, posted on X:



"The desperation of the Congress and its ecosystem of journalists and influencers to deflect from the controversial USAID funding – routed through various George Soros-linked fronts and a labyrinth of NGO structures to meddle with India's electo-

ral process – is a dead giveaway. It is now obvious who the beneficiaries are."

Mr. Malviya's statement came in response to a post by Congress general secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh.

Mr. Ramesh said: "None other than the Union Fi-

**The USAID projects in question are official govt.-to-govt. partnerships, transparently executed as Externally Aided Projects. The Centre simply channels these funds to States... which is well within the framework of cooperative federalism**

**AMIT MALVIYA**  
BJP IT cell head



nance Ministry has thoroughly exposed the lies of the PM and his jhoot brigade, including his dapper External Affairs Minister. As stated in the Finance Ministry's annual report for 2023-24, USAID is currently implementing seven projects in collaboration

with the Government of India, with a combined budget of approximately \$750 million. Not a single of these projects has to do with voter turnout. ALL of them are with and through the Union Government."

## 'Official partnerships'

Replying to his remarks, the BJP leader said: "...let us be clear –the USAID projects in question are official government-to-government partnerships, transparently executed as Externally Aided Projects (EAPs). The Centre simply channels these funds to States for development, which is well within the framework of cooperative federalism."

He said: "In fact, the ve-

ry projects cited in the Finance Ministry's 2023-24 report (uploaded in July 2024) trace their origins back to 2010-11. This isn't new – even the 2014-15 report confirms the same. The question is: why is the Congress defending covert interference by foreign donors and organisations linked to George Soros, which seek to destabilise our democracy under the guise of philanthropy? India's sovereignty is not up for sale."

"Let us drop the selective amnesia and political theatrics. Facts matter. India's governance will not be dictated by foreign agents masquerading as benefactors," Mr. Malviya said.



# DECCAN Chronicle

25 FEBRUARY 2025

## To fight BJP, win elections, Cong must get act together

**T**he roller-coaster ride the Congress has been having with respect to election results over the past year appears to have triggered certain out-of-the-box thoughts within the party, if the reports of the new mechanisms the party is contemplating setting up are true. It is for the party to decide if it were to follow up on them seriously or to just air great ideas and then go back to business as usual.

The latest is the suggestion to set up an election management committee which will be responsible for all aspects of fighting polls — from ticket distribution to election campaign management to deciding where and how alliances can be made. The party has at present a slew of panels such as manifesto committee, screening committee, central election committee and alliance committee with little coordination and often with overlapping roles. It may be remembered that there has been criticism against the party leadership for torpedoing its own interests in the Haryana Assembly election while it was caught napping when the saffron alliance was making steady progress in propitiating the voters even while ensuring that the voters list had all the names from its side in Maharashtra.

The Congress had cut a sorry figure levelling unsubstantiated allegations against the ECI after the Haryana and Maharashtra elections. While it alleged irregularities in the counting process in Haryana, it raised questions about the last hour rush and increased in the number of votes in a short span of time. The allegations were serious but the party has not yet come up with convincing evidence to put the poll body under the cloud of suspicion. On the contrary, it lent credence to its critics who equate the Congress to a bad workman who blames his tools.

The party had earlier this month set up an eight-member Empowered Action Group of Leaders and Experts, or Eagle, to "monitor the conduct of free and fair elections by the Election Commission of India". The body was supposed to keep a bird's eye view on the doings of the Election Commission of India, which the party believes plays a partisan role. A centralised unit with a command and control system which can take dynamic decisions based on the feedback from within the party and from outside could do well for the party.

While setting up new panels with responsibilities is one way of addressing the issues the party is facing on the poll front, it must realise that the formation of fancy committees is no match for its opponents whose political and election management mechanisms work 24/7 all 365 days a year. The BJP has a politics and has the organisational mechanism to reach it to its zestful cadre who communicate to the last man and try and bring him to its side. The Congress still has grassroots workers who almost take the party to the last lap with a winnable momentum but return disappointed as the leadership fails to carry the baton forward and touch the finishing line ahead of its opponents.

It's time the Congress got its acts together politically and electorally. It can take a leaf or two out of its principal opponent's books on organisational effectiveness. Chest-beating after every election defeat is not the best thing a political party can do; devising ways to win them is.



Date: 25-02-2025

## ■ No project linked to voter turnout: Jairam Cong: BJP's 'jhooth brigade' exposed by finance ministry

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, FEB. 24

The Congress on Monday accused the Centre of misleading the public about US Agency for International Development (USAID) funding to India. Citing the Union finance ministry's latest report, the Congress claimed that the Union finance ministry has "thoroughly exposed" the BJP's "lies" with its annual report for 2023-24 stating that the US agency is currently implementing seven projects in collaboration with the Government of India and none of them has anything to do with voter turnout.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said, "None other than the Union finance ministry has thoroughly exposed the lies of the PM and his jhoot brigade, including his dapper external affairs minister."

### CONTROVERSY

ERUPTED earlier this month after the Elon Musk-led DOGE claimed that it had cancelled a \$21 million grant to India to boost 'voter turnout'

As stated in the finance ministry's annual report for 2023-24, USAID is currently implementing seven projects in collaboration with the Government of India, with a combined budget of approximately \$750 million, he said in a post on X.

"Not a single of these projects has to do with voter turnout. All of them are with and through the Union government," Mr Ramesh said.

For the financial year 2023-24, an obligation of a total of \$97 million (about ₹825 crore) has been made by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) under the seven projects, the ministry report said.

The department of economic affairs under the finance ministry, which is the nodal department for bilateral funding arrangements, has also shared the details of projects funded in 2023-24 in the report.

During the year, no funding was made for enhancing voter turnout but to projects related to agriculture and food security programme; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); renewable energy; disaster management and health.

Political controversy erupted in the country earlier this month after the Elon Musk-led DOGE (department of government efficiency) claimed that it had cancelled a \$21 million grant to India to boost "voter turnout".

US President Donald Trump also repeatedly claimed that USAID under the previous administration led by Joe Biden allocated \$21 million in funding to India for 'voter turnout'.



Dated: 25.02.2015

## New CEC to chair meet on modern poll management

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** The Election Commission is set to reflect on issues related to modern



election management, including an enabling IT architecture and enhancement of its social media outreach, at a conference with chief electoral officers (CEOs) of all states and UTs here from March 4-5.

This is the first event to be chaired by newly appointed chief election commissioner **Gyanesh Kumar**. In a first, the EC has instructed every CEO to nominate a district election officer and an electoral registration officer to participate in the conference.

"As statutory authorities, CEOs, DEOs and EROs are im-

portant functionaries at the state, district and assembly constituency levels," the EC said in a statement on Monday.

To be held at the India International Institute of Democracy & Election Management, the two-day conference will serve as a platform for election officials of states and UTs for brainstorming and learning from each other's experiences.

The first day of the conference will witness discussions on key areas of modern election management, including IT architecture, effective communication, enhancing social media outreach and statutory role of different functionaries in the electoral processes. On the second day, CEOs of states and UTs will present their respective action plan on thematic discussions from Day 1.

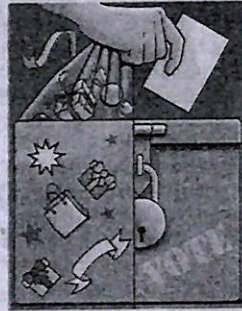


# Ballot Points

*Poll results in Western countries hold lessons for politicians everywhere, including India*

German voters didn't surprise in Sunday's election. Since no party has a clear majority, long coalition talks lie ahead, but far-right AfD will remain out of govt even though it has over a fifth of the vote, exactly double its 2021 share. When the far-right or a Trump-like leader surges, it means voters are hurting. And Germany's economic troubles are well-known. After shrinking for two straight years, the economy is back at its 2019 level. Low unemployment and moderate fiscal deficit are virtues ordinarily, but not when voters wake up feeling poorer every day. And voter pessimism certainly isn't conducive to re-election – ask Kamala Harris and Rishi Sunak.

Sunak called an early election counting on British economy's unexpected growth last year. Inflation was cooling finally, so were interest rates. But as far as voters were concerned, prices were about 20% too high and their EMIs had ballooned. A survey found



only one in five Britons thought the economy was in good shape. The same popular mood ousted Democrats in US. Before the Nov election, about half of US voters said they were worse off than they had been at the end of Trump's first term, even though inflation had slumped from 9% in 2022 to around 2% by late last year. China, despite its one-party dictatorship, is also worried about public mood. A survey by Harvard-Stanford academics in 2023 showed less than 30% of Chinese felt they were better off than they

had been five years earlier – a huge fall from 75% in 2014. China's trying everything to fire up the economy, with sub-5% growth predicted for 2025 and 2026.

It's time Indian leaders also paid heed to the public mood. Their increasing reliance on doles and direct benefit transfers to win polls is bad economics, even if it wins polls in the short-term. As state after state, from Himachal to Punjab, Maharashtra and Karnataka, has realised, delivering freebies – whatever form it takes – and generous cash handouts is hard to maintain. Maharashtra's 50% fare concession to women and senior citizens, for instance, is costing the state transport corporation ₹3cr a day. Besides, doles don't address voters' need to feel better off over a longer period of time. A cash transfer generates a small amount of feel-good. It doesn't buy economic security. Only rapid economic growth plus good jobs can deliver that.



Dated: 25.02.2025

## BJP, Cong trade charges over finance ministry's report on USAID funds

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

REFERRING to the Union finance ministry annual report on USAID-funded projects in India, Congress on Monday claimed it has thoroughly exposed the government's "falsehoods." In response, the BJP accused the opposition party of defending "covert interference" by foreign donors attempting to destabilise India.

Amid the raging political row over the USAID's alleged role in influencing Indian elections, the latest annual report of the finance ministry has disclosed that the agency funded seven projects worth USD 750 million in 2023-24 in partnership with the Government of India.

Congress general secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh posted on X: "None other than the Union finance ministry has thoroughly exposed the lies of the PM and his 'jhoot' brigade, including the External Affairs Minister."

As stated in the finance ministry's annual report for 2023-24, USAID is currently imple-

menting seven projects in collaboration with the government of India, with a combined budget of approximately USD 750 million, he said. "Not one of these projects has to do with voter turnout. All of them are with and through the Union government," Ramesh said.

BJP IT department head Amit Malviya hit back, saying the desperation of the Congress and its ecosystem to deflect

from the controversial USAID funds routed through various "George Soros-linked fronts and a labyrinth of NGO to meddle with India's electoral process is a dead giveaway". It is now

obvious who the beneficiaries are, Malviya said on X.

He said the USAID projects in question are official government-to-government partnerships, transparently executed as Externally Aided Projects.

The Centre simply channels these funds to states for development, which is well within the framework of cooperative federalism, he said, adding, the projects cited in the report date back to 2010-11.





Dated: 25.09.2025

# ONOE panel meet today, stormy session expected

Former CJI & ex-chief of law panel among 4 to depose before JPC

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

FORMER Chief Justice of India UU Lalit and former chairperson of Law Commission Ritu Raj Awasthi are among four legal experts to depose on Tuesday before the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) scrutinising the One Nation One Election (ONOE) Bill.

"The Joint Committee on the Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Ninth Amendment) Bill, 2024 and the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024, will interact with legal experts," an official notice said.

The other two witnesses are Niten Chandra, secretary of a high-level committee led by former President Ramnath Kovind, and former Congress MP E M Sudarsana Natchiappan. As chairman of the Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice, the latter submitted a report on 'Feasibility of Holding Simultaneous Elections' favouring simultaneous polls.

The 39-member JPC headed by former Union Minister P P Chaudhary was mandated to scrutinise the two bills introduced during the Monsoon session of Parliament.

The panel has convened two meetings so far, and the third meeting is expected to see fireworks as, for the first time, legal experts are deposing before it. Opposition parties have op-



Ramnath Kovind chairs a meeting of the high-level committee on ONOE | FILE PHOTO

posed the Bill, alleging it is 'anti-federal' and against the basic structure of the Constitution. The government, however, says that synchronising electoral timelines will help meet logistical challenges, reduce costs, and minimise disruptions caused by frequent elections.

The panel's first meeting witnessed a strong exchange of opinions between Opposition and BJP MPs on the proposed legislation, with several opposition MPs questioning the claim that simultaneous Lok Sabha and assembly polls will cut expenditure.

While Niten Chandra, secretary of the high-level committee, is expected to defend its proposals on conducting simultaneous polls across the country, the Opposition is all set to present its arguments aggressively, said a source familiar

with the meeting.

To synchronise the terms of the Lok Sabha and state assemblies, the Kovind panel has proposed the insertion of Article 82A into the Constitution.

It says that the new government, which takes charge after the Lok Sabha election, should set an "appointed date" to effect the constitutional changes. All the state Assemblies formed after the 'appointed date' would have their terms expire with the Lok Sabha.

Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi, who led the 22nd Law Commission, submitted its report on simultaneous polls to the Union Law Ministry last March, recommending synchronising the terms of state Assemblies in "two phases" in the next five years so that the first simultaneous elections could be held in May-June 2029.



D.T. Next

Date: 25.09.2025

## **EC's 2-day meet to debate issues**

**NEW DELHI:** The Election Commission is holding a two-day conference early next month with its chief electoral officers to brainstorm on various issues, including modern poll management.

The conference to be held on March 4 and 5 is the first such gathering of poll officials to be held since Gyanesh Kumar assumed charge as the CEC.

In a first, the chief electoral officers (CEOs) have been instructed to nominate a district election officer (DEO) and an electoral registration officer (ERO) to take part in the conference. As statutory authorities, the CEOs, DEOs and EROs are important functionaries at the state, district and assembly constituency level.

Day one of the conference will have discussions on key areas of modern election management, including IT architecture, effective communication, enhancing social media outreach and statutory role of different functionaries in the electoral processes. On day two, the CEOs will present their respective action plan on thematic discussions of the previous day, the EC said.



\$21 mn problem: Malviya says USAID projects have nothing to do with poll process

# FinMin's report reignites Cong-BJP slugfest over US voter turnout 'aid'



**None other than the Union Finance Ministry has thoroughly exposed the lies of the PM and his lies brigade, including his dapper External Affairs Minister**

**— Jai Ram Ramesh, Congress communications in-charge**

**NEW DELHI:** The Congress on Monday cited a Union Finance Ministry report on the USAID-funded projects in India to claim that it has thoroughly exposed the government's "lies", prompting the BJP to accuse the opposition party of defending "covert interference" by foreign donors seeking to destabilise India's democracy.

Amid a raging political controversy over USAID's alleged role in influencing Indian elections, the latest annual report of the finance ministry has disclosed that the agency funded seven projects worth \$ 750 million in 2023-24 in partnership with the government of India.

Seizing on the information, Congress general secretary (communi-

cations) Jai Ram Ramesh said on X, "None other than the Union Finance Ministry has thoroughly exposed the lies of the PM and his lies brigade, including his dapper External Affairs Minister."

As stated in the finance ministry's annual report for 2023-24, USAID is currently implementing seven projects in collaboration with the government of India, with a combined budget of approximately \$ 750 million, he said.

"Not a single of these projects has to do with voter turnout. All of them are with and through the Union government," Ramesh said.

BJP IT department head Amit Malviya hit back, claiming that the desperation of the Congress and its ecosystem to deflect from the controversial USAID funding routed through various "George So-

ros-linked fronts and a labyrinth of NGO structures to meddle with India's electoral process is a dead giveaway."

It is now obvious who the beneficiaries are, Malviya said on X.

He said the USAID projects in question are official government-to-government partnerships, transparently executed as Externally Aided Projects (EAPs).

The Centre simply channels these funds to states for development, which is well within the framework of cooperative federalism, he added.

"India's sovereignty is not up for sale. Let us drop the selective amnesia and political theatrics. Facts matter. India's governance will not be dictated by foreign agents masquerading as benefactors," Malviya said.



# வார்த்தை போர்!

- அமெரிக்க நிதியுதவி விவகாரத்தில்...
- பா.ஜ., - காங்கிரஸ் கடும் மோதல்

- நமது டில்லி நிருபர் -

அமெரிக்காவின் சர்வதேச மேம்பாட்டு நிறுவனம் இந்தியாவுக்கு வழங்கியதாகக் கூறப்படும் நிதி தொடர்பான விவகாரத்தில், பா.ஜ., - காங்., தலைவர்களிடையே வார்த்தைப் போர் வெடித்துள்ளது.

நம் நாட்டு தேர்தலில் ஓட்டு சதவீதத்தை அதிகரிக்க, யு.எஸ்.ஏ.ஐ.டி., எனப்படும் அமெரிக்க சர்வதேச மேம்பாட்டு அமைப்பு வாயிலாக, 2012லிருந்து 182 கோடி ரூபாய் வழங்கி வருவதாகவும், அந்த நிதியை தற்போது நிறுத்தி விட்டதாகவும், அமெரிக்க அதிபராக பதவியேற்றுள்ள டொனால்டு டிரம்ப் சமீபத்தில் தெரிவித்திருந்தார்.

'இந்தியாவிடம் நிறைய பணம் உள்ளது. யாரையோ தேர்தலில் வெற்றி பெற வைக்க, முந்தைய அதிபர் ஜோ பைடன் நிர்வாகம் முயற்சி செய்துள்ளது' என, டொனால்டு டிரம்ப் குற்றஞ்சாட்டியது, நம் நாட்டு அரசியலில் புயலை கிளப்பியது.

இதையடுத்து, இந்த விவகாரம் தொடர்பாக, பா.ஜ., மற்றும் காங்கிரஸ் தலைவர்கள் ஒருவரை ஒருவர் கடுமையாக விமர்சித்து

வருகின்றனர். கடந்த லோக் சபா தேர்தலில் நேரந்திர மோடி தலைமையிலான அரசை மாற்ற வேண்டுமென்பதற்காகவே, இந்த நிதி இந்தியாவுக்குள் வந்ததாகவும், இதன் பின்னணியில் காங்கிரஸ் இருப்பதாகவும் பா.ஜ., தலைவர்கள் குற்றஞ்சாட்டினர். இதற்கு, காங்கிரஸ் தலைவர்கள் கடும் எதிர்ப்பு தெரிவித்தனர்.

யார் வாயிலாக, எதற்காக இந்த நிதி வந்தது என்ற கேள்விகள் ஒருபுறம் பரபரப்பை ஏற்படுத்திய நிலையில், ஒரு ஆங்கில பத்திரிகை, 'அது போன்ற நிதி இந்தியாவுக்கு வரவில்லை. அமெரிக்க அதிபர் கூறும் தகவல் உண்மையல்ல' என்று செய்தி வெளியிட்டது.

இதற்கிடையே, அமெரிக்கா விடமிருந்து பெற்ற நிதி குறித்து, மத்திய நிதி அமைச்சகம் அறிக்கை

வெளியிட்டது. அதில், '2023 - 24ம் நிதியாண்டில், அமெரிக்காவின் யு.எஸ்.ஏ.ஐ.டி., இந்திய அரசுடன் இணைந்து, 6,498 கோடி ரூபாய் நிதியுதவிடன் ஏழு திட்டங்களை செயல்படுத்தி வருகிறது. இந்த திட்டங்கள் எதுவும் தேர்தல் அல்லது ஓட்டு சதவீத அதிகரிப்புடன் தொடர்புடையவை அல்ல' என, கூறப்பட்டிருந்தது.

விவசாயம், உணவு பாதுகாப்பு, குடிநீர், சுகாதாரம், புதுப்பிக்கத்தக்க எரிசக்தி, பேரிடர் மேலாண்மை, காலநிலை திட்டங்கள் மற்றும் புதுமை திட்டங்களுக்காக இந்த நிதி பெறப்பட்டதாக அந்த அறிக்கையில் குறிப்பிடப்பட்டுள்ளது.

இருப்பினும், பா.ஜ., மற்றும் காங்கிரஸ் கட்சியினர் ஒருவர் மீது ஒருவர் கடுமையான விமர்சனங்களை முன் வைத்து வருவதால், தேசிய அரசியல் களம் குடுபிடித்துள்ளது.



Dinakaran

Date: 25.02.2025

நவீன தேர்தல் மேலாண்மை குறித்து

## தேர்தல் ஆணையம் 2 நாள் ஆலோசனை

புதுடெல்லி, பிப்.25: நாடு முழுவதும் தேர்தல் நடைமுறைகளை நவீனப்படுத்துவது குறித்தும், தற்போதுள்ள நடைமுறையில் செய்ய வேண்டிய மாற்றங்கள் குறித்தும் தேர்தல் ஆணையம் ஆலோசனை நடத்த உள்ளது. இதற்காக 2 நாள் மாநாடு வரும் மார்ச் 4 மற்றும் 5ம் தேதிகளில் டெல்லியில் நடைபெற உள்ளது. புதிய தலைமை தேர்தல் கமிஷனராக ஞானேஷ்குமார் பொறுப்பேற்ற பிறகு நடக்கும் முதல் கூட்டத்தில் அனைத்து மாநில தலைமை தேர்தல் அதிகாரிகளும் கலந்து கொள்ள உள்ளனர். இந்த கூட்டத்தில் மாவட்ட தேர்தல் அதிகாரிகள் மற்றும் வாக்காளர் பதிவு அதிகாரிகள் ஆகியோரையும் பங்கேற்க தலைமை தேர்தல் அதிகாரிகளுக்கு அறிவுறுத்தப்பட்டுள்ளது. இந்த மாநாட்டின் முதல் நாள், தகவல் தொழில்நுட்ப கட்டமைப்பு, பயனுள்ள தகவல் தொடர்பு, சமூக

### ஒரேநாடு, ஒரே தேர்தல் கூட்டாட்சியை பாதிக்காது

மக்களவை மற்றும் மாநில சட்டப்பேரவைகளுக்கு ஒரே நேரத்தில் தேர்தல் நடத்துவது ஜனநாயகத்துக்கு விரோதமானது அல்ல, கூட்டாட்சி அமைப்பை பாதிக்காது என ஒன்றிய சட்ட அமைச்சகம், ஒரே நாடு, ஒரே தேர்தல் மசோதாக்களை ஆய்வு செய்யும் நாபானுமன்ற கூட்டுக் குழுவிடம் தெரிவித்துள்ளது. இந்த கூட்டுக் குழுவின் அடுத்த கூட்டம் இன்று நடைபெற உள்ளது.

ஊடக வெளிப்பாட்டை மேம்படுத்துதல் மற்றும் பல்வேறு சட்டப்பூர்வ பங்கு உள்ளிட்ட நவீன தேர்தல் நிர்வாகத்தின் முக்கிய பகுதிகள் குறித்த விவாதங்கள் நடைபெறும்.



Daily Thanthi

Date: 25.02.2025

## தலைமை தேர்தல் கமிஷனர் புனித நீராடல்



உத்தரபிரதேச மாநிலம் பிரயாக்ராஜில் நடந்து வரும் மகா கும்பமேளாவில் தலைமை தேர்தல் கமிஷனர் ஞானேஷ்குமார் கலந்து கொண்டார். அவர் திரிவேணி சங்கமத்தில் புனித நீராடி, சில சடங்குகள் செய்தபோது எடுத்த படம்.