



Kashmir's Papier Mache Revives the Dodo

[Source: TH](#)

Papier mache artisans in Srinagar are **crafting and exporting** large quantities of **dodo** figurines, primarily to **Mauritius** (where the dodo was native and is a national symbol) and **Europe** around Christmas 2024.

▪ **Dodo:**

- The dodo (*Raphus cucullatus*) is an **extinct** (since 1681) **flightless bird** that was **endemic to the island of Mauritius**, which is **east of Madagascar** in the Indian Ocean.
- It belonged to the **Columbidae family** (doves and pigeons).
- It became extinct due to **human activity** and the **introduction of invasive species** like pigs, rats, and cats, which preyed on its eggs and chicks.

▪ **Papier Mache Art:**

- Papier mache, a **600-year-old handicraft in Kashmir**, involves the **use of paper pulp** to create colorful, intricately decorated objects.
- This craft has its **origins to the 15th century** under **King Zain-ul-Abidin**, who invited **Central Asian artisans**.
- Traditionally influenced by **Persian motifs**, the craft recently incorporated dodos, introduced around two decades ago, possibly by Mauritian tourists.

▪ **Other Crafts of Kashmir:**

- Seven Kashmiri crafts, including **carpets, pashmina, sozni, kani shawls, walnut wood carving, khatamband, and papier mache**, have got **Geographical Indication (GI) tags**.

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Dodo facts

Here is some information about the dodo bird:

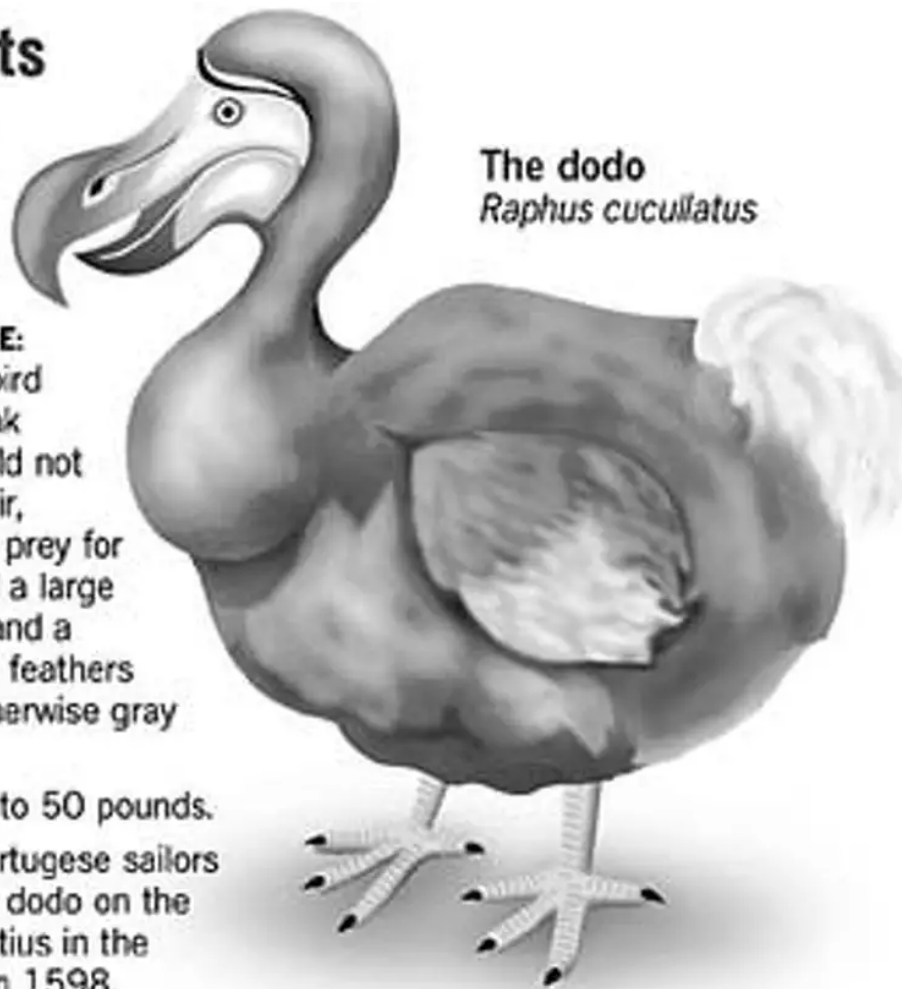
■ APPEARANCE:

Large, plump bird with small, weak wings that could not lift it into the air, making it easy prey for humans. It had a large hooked beak, and a plume of white feathers adorned its otherwise gray body.

■ WEIGHT: 40 to 50 pounds.

■ **HABITAT:** Portuguese sailors discovered the dodo on the island of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean in 1598. Having never seen humans, the bird was not frightened. Sailors mistook its lack of fear as stupidity, and dubbed the bird "dodo."

■ **EXTINCTION:** Many dodo birds were killed by humans. Dogs and pigs introduced onto the island of Mauritius preyed on its eggs. By 1681, the dodo was gone, making it the first example of how humans can drive another species to extinction.



The dodo
Raphus cucullatus



Source: Chronicle research

TODD TRUMBULL / The Chronicle

Read More: [Cultural Exchange and Growth of Kashmir's Craft Industry](#), [Human-induced Extinction of Dodo](#)

Underutilization of Operation Greens Scheme

[Source: DTE](#)

Why in News?

Recently, a [Parliamentary Standing Committee \(PSC\) on Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Food Processing](#) tabled a report highlighting the underperformance [Operation Greens \(OG\) scheme](#).

- The scheme's limited success raises concerns about the government's ability to address the challenges of volatile agricultural markets and post-harvest losses.

What are the Key Findings of the PSC Report?

- **Underutilisation of Budget:** Only 34% (Rs 59.44 crore) of the Rs 173.40 crore allocated for the 2024-25 financial year has been spent by October 2024.
 - **65.73% of the allocated budget remains unspent**, which raises concerns about meeting expenditure guidelines for the remaining fiscal year.
- **Limited Impact on Price Stabilization:** Despite the scheme's objective to stabilize crop prices, **onion farmers in Maharashtra are facing a price crash**, with onion prices falling by nearly 50%.
 - **Potato shortages** are being experienced in states like Odisha and Jharkhand, exacerbated by **production dips** in West Bengal due to weather conditions.
- **Policy Inconsistencies:** The government's inconsistent policies, like the **export ban and its extension**, and the imposition of export duties, have frustrated onion farmers, affecting their ability to secure fair prices.
- **Challenges in Achieving Scheme's Mandate:** The scheme has **struggled to meet its dual objectives:** ensuring farmers receive fair prices while maintaining affordable prices for consumers.
 - The **underfunding and lack of progress** highlight the challenges in stabilizing agricultural markets and addressing infrastructure gaps in [post-harvest management](#).

What is the Operation Greens Scheme?

- **About:** Operation Greens, a **central sector scheme** launched in 2018, under the [Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADA Yojana](#), aims to stabilize the prices of **perishable crops** and enhance farmers' earnings by drawing inspiration from "[Operation Flood \(White Revolution\)](#)".
- **Objectives:**
 - **Long-Term Interventions:** Enhance farmers' value realization through support for production clusters and [Farmers Producer Organisations \(FPOs\)](#).
 - Reduce [post-harvest losses](#) via farm gate infrastructure, agri-logistics, and storage facilities.
 - Boost [food processing](#) and value addition by linking production clusters with the market.
 - **Short-Term Interventions:** **Protect growers from distress sales** and reduce post-harvest losses.
- **Implementation:** OG is implemented by the **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare**, with funding provided by the [National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India \(NAFED\)](#).
- **Expansion of Scope:** The OG scheme initially focused on **Tomato, Onion, and Potato (TOP)**.
 - However, as part of the [15th Financial Commission Cycle \(2021-26\)](#), its scope expanded to include **22 perishable crops** such as **fruits** (e.g., Mango, Banana, Grapes), **vegetables** (e.g., Carrot, Beans, Okra), **gourd family** (e.g., Bottle Gourd, Bitter Gourd), and other crops like **Garlic, Ginger, and Shrimp**.

Conjugal Visits in Prisons

[Source: TH](#)

The Delhi Government is reconsidering a proposal to **allow conjugal visits for prisoners.**

- **Conjugal Visits:**
 - It is a **private family visit** where **inmates spend time**, including intimate moments, with their legal spouses within the **prison**.
 - It promotes **inmate rehabilitation** and **long-term recovery**, enhancing **psychological well-being** and **sustaining marital ties of prisoners**.
- **Judicial Landmarks:**
 - Punjab & Haryana **High Court** in 2014 has upheld the **right to procreation (reproduction)** for prisoners.
 - Madras High Court in 2018 allowed **parole** for conjugal relations.
 - In July 2023, Justice S.M. Subramaniam of the Madras High Court urged the Tamil Nadu government to **consider allowing conjugal relations for prisoners** within prison precincts.
- **Other Countries:** Conjugal visits are **allowed in some US states** but not federal prisons.
 - In Europe, countries like **Spain, France, Sweden, and Denmark permit such visits**, with **Spain offering monthly** and **Sweden up to 9 hour sessions**.

Read More: [Open Prisons in India](#)

Increased Regulatory Action on Nidhi Companies

[Source: LM](#)

In 2024, the **Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA)** and **Registrars of Companies (RoCs)** significantly **intensified action** against **Nidhi companies** and **firms defaulting on beneficial ownership disclosures**.

- This was done to ensure financial transparency, curbs illicit activities in the non-banking sector, and strengthens corporate governance.
- RoCs issued 131 orders against Nidhis, a **72% rise from 2023**, with penalties ranging from Rs 10,000 to Rs 30 lakh.
- **Beneficial Ownership** refers to the individuals who **ultimately own or control a company**, even if the shares are held in another person's name.
 - Under the **Companies Act, 2013**, companies must disclose the identity of individuals who have **significant control or own 25% or more of the shares**.
- **Nidhi Companies** are **non-banking financial entities (NBFC)** that operate under **Section 406** of the **Companies Act, 2013**.
 - These companies are formed to **encourage savings and provide loans** exclusively to their **members**.
 - Nidhis are **not required to obtain an RBI license** but must adhere to strict disclosure and operational norms.

- They are registered as **public limited companies** and include "**Nidhi Limited**" in their name.
- They must maintain a minimum of **200 members** within a year and **Rs 20 lakh in net owned funds**.

Read More: [Nidhi Companies](#)

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