



India's First Beggar-Free City

Why in News?

Indore has become the **country's first beggar-free city** after authorities rehabilitated beggars by providing them with employment opportunities and enrolled children involved in begging into schools.

Key Points

- **Multi-Phase Campaign Strategy:**
 - In February 2024, the city launched an [anti-begging campaign](#) under the **Women and Child Development Department**.
 - At the time, officials identified around 5,000 beggars, including 500 children, living on the streets of Indore.
 - The campaign was conducted in two major phases:
 - **Phase 1:** Awareness drives to inform the public and engage stakeholders.
 - **Phase 2:** Rehabilitation of beggars through employment assistance and school enrolment for children.
 - Many beggars were found to have migrated from Rajasthan, highlighting **inter-state dimensions of urban begging**.
- **National and International Recognition:**
 - The initiative has been **recognised as a model project** by the **Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**.
 - Indore is among 10 cities selected for a pilot project to eliminate begging in urban areas.
 - A [World Bank](#) team has also acknowledged the campaign's impact.

MPPSC Prelims Course

आ Hindi Medium

En English Medium

📅 100+ Hours of Classes

📖 Online Test Series

Admissions Open

☎ 87501 87501

Legal Framework Regarding Begging

- **Colonial Law:** The [Criminal Tribes Act of 1871](#) criminalised [nomadic tribes](#), associating them with **vagrancy and begging**.
- **Current Legal Framework:** The **Constitution of India** allows both the **Union and state governments** to enact laws on **vagrancy (includes beggary), nomadic, and migratory**

tribes under the **Concurrent List** (List III, Entry 15).

- There is **no central Act on beggary**. Instead, many states and Union Territories have based their laws on the **Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, 1959**.
 - The Act defines a beggar as anyone **soliciting alms, performing or offering articles for sale, or appearing destitute** without visible means of subsistence.
- **Jurisprudence:** The **Delhi High Court**, in 2018, ruled that **the Bombay Act (criminalising begging)** was arbitrary and violated the right to live with dignity, underscoring the importance of addressing poverty without criminalizing it.
 - The **Supreme Court of India** in 2021 rejected a **Public Interest Litigation** seeking to remove beggars from public spaces, emphasizing that begging is a **socio-economic problem** rather than a **criminal issue**.
- **SMILE:** Launched in 2022, **Support for Marginalised Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise (SMILE)** by Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, aims to **rehabilitate beggars** by providing medical care, education, and skills training, working toward a **"beggar-free" India by 2026**.
 - As of 2024, 970 individuals have rehabilitated under SMILE, including 352 children.

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/indias-first-beggar-free-city>

