Punjab & Haryana HC Issues Notice on Anti-Begging Laws | Haryana | 23 Jan 2025

Why in News?

The **Punjab and Haryana High Court** has issued notices to the governments of Haryana and Punjab regarding a **Public Interest Litigation (PIL)** petition that challenges the **constitutionality of certain provisions in 50-year-old state laws that criminalise begging**.

Key Points

- **About the Petition:**
  - The petition contends that **anti-begging laws** in **Punjab** and **Haryana** are discriminatory and infringe upon the **rights to equality, life,** and **personal liberty guaranteed** by the Constitution of India.
  - The PIL argues that the State has a social contract to ensure its citizens are able to live a dignified life and that the State **"cannot be allowed"** to treat begging as an offence.
  - The petition further takes issue with the way the act of begging has been defined in these laws, arguing that they **violated Articles 14, 19, and 21** of the **Constitution of India**.
- **Definition of Begging:**
  - The definition classifies **any act of soliciting or receiving alms in public places as begging, including by singing, dancing, fortune-telling, performing tricks,** or **selling articles.**
  - The only difference between these vocations and others is that these vocations have **"no price tag"** as that's been left to the audience to pay.
  - The law also defines begging as asking for alms on **private property,** especially if it involves **showing wounds, deformities, or injuries.**
  - The definition of begging in the **Haryana Prevention of Beggary Act, 1971,** which has been challenged, is based on the **Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, 1959.**
  - It is a definition that is used by the **Union government,** to identify people engaged in begging, for **welfare** and **rehabilitation schemes.**
- **Legal Implications:**
  - The outcome of this case could have significant implications for the **treatment of marginalized communities** and the **legal framework surrounding poverty** and **homelessness** in India.

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