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GHMC project for beggars a failure

Nov 1: Three years after the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation launched a beggar rehabilitation project, there is not a single beggar living in the rehabilitation homes set up by the corporation. The project has flopped, the main reason being lack of commitment on the part of the authorities concerned to continue with the project.

Officials claim that beggar rehabilitation is a continuous process; some blame citizens for not allowing beggar rehabilitation homes in their colonies. According to a survey conducted six years ago by the Hyderabad District Collectorate in association with an NGO, the Hyderabad Council of Human Welfare, there were about 10,000 beggars in the erstwhile MCH area (the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad) and their combined earnings through begging were pegged at a whopping `15 crore per annum.

There are five beggar rehabilitation homes run by the GHMC, one each in East, West, Central, North and South zone, but not a single beggar stays there, although officials claim that some of the beggars who do not have shelter, come and sleep here.

The beggar rehabilitation project envisaged shifting beggars to the GHMC-run homes and providing them with training in sewing and other vocations to help them stand on their own feet. "It is a social problem. We gave them counselling after they were brought to the homes. But they have been getting back to the streets to resume their old earning activities. In one case, one of the shelter homes was attacked by beggars who took away their children from the home," a senior GHMC official said.

It is not easy to rehabilitate beggars, but officials insist the project is still continuing. Employees of GHMC and the Hyderabad Council of Human Welfare, an NGO, were beaten up by beggars when they tried to take child beggars from the Dilsukhnagar area. Such resistance from the beggars themselves makes the project difficult to implement.