

## Campaign launched to implement right to education

A nationwide campaign has been launched to urge the government to give teeth to the Right to Education Bill, which aims at making education compulsory for all children aged 6-14 in India.

Representatives of teachers' organisations, civil society groups and NGOs from across the country came together here Tuesday evening and formed a national campaign committee to intensify the countrywide mass campaign.

'In 2002, the 86th constitutional amendment included education as a fundamental right by incorporating Article 21(A) of the constitution. It generated some hope that every child in India would have access to education,' Ranjan Mohanty, convenor of the newly formed committee, told IANS.

'Though around five years have passed, the parliament has not enacted a law to make it effective. Right to education as a fundamental right is not possible without central legislation and without introducing a common school system,' he noted.

'In 1994, following a judgment by the Supreme Court, the centre asked the states to make education compulsory for children aged 6-14. But the state governments washed their hands off saying it would add to their financial burden,' Mohanty said.

The meet was organised by the National Co-ordination Committee of Indian Teachers Organisation (NCCITO) - a teachers' body, Campaign Against Child Labour (CACL) - a network of over 6,000 groups working to eradicate child labour and People's Campaign for Common School System (PCCSS) - a group of academicians and NGOs - at the Indian Social Institute in the capital.

All members of the campaign meet were of the view that the government was withdrawing from its responsibility by sending a model draft bill to state governments suggesting legislation at the state level.

'If the Centre is dropping the Right to Education Bill now, millions of children would be further pushed into forced labour,' Mohanty added.

People nominated as members of the national campaign committee include eminent social activist Basanti Devi, teachers' leader Abani Boral and former foreign secretary Muchkund Dubey.

The committee has requested all interested associations, networks and groups committed to right to education becoming a reality to join the national campaign committee.

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