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sonia for review of Education Bill

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, NOV 24. The Leader of the Opposition, Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, has asked the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, to re-examine the Constitution (83rd amendment) Bill which aims to make education a fundamental right since there are certain aspects which were touched upon by the Parliamentary Committee on Education but have been inadequately covered in the proposed legislation.

Mrs. Gandhi has said the Bill in its enthusiasm to make education a fundamental right has ignored the need to enforce quality of education. Second, the word "compulsory" in the amended Article 21 does not go with the spirit of a fundamental right as it denotes enforcement. "A right is not given in a spirit of enforcement. The citizen of six to 14 years shall have a fundamental right to free education. The State shall have a corresponding obligation to provide that education. This perhaps needs clearer emphasis in the legislation," she observed in a letter to the Prime Minister.

Since the Bill proposes compulsory education only till the child is 4 14 years old by then he would

have passed eighth standard, the legislation should provide for a formal certificate for those passing this class. Penal provisions on parents should be avoided because the compulsion should be on states to provide essential facilities rather than on parents majority of whom struggle for survival.

Mrs Gandhi has also pointed out that Article 45 of Directive Principles need not be deleted merely because education is being made a fundamental right. Directive Principles embody the State's objectives and there is no conflict between them and fundamental rights.

The exemption given to educational institutions not maintained by the state or not receiving aid from the State needed to be reviewed, felt Mrs. Gandhi. Children studying in these institutions should not be deprived of their fundamental right. Equally, private institutions should accept this duty and obligation to the society. Finally, all initiative has been left in the hand of states." The Centre's role, responsibility and obligation cannot be wished away and required clearer definition in the legislation," she observed.

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