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USE AND ABUSE

Child abuse has long been a grey area. For instance, the law is silent on the rape of a male child. Now, a new bill, Offences Against Children Act, 2006, lays down rules

- 1 Sexual assault:** Any type of penetration (including sodomy) or manipulation of child's body for penetration
- For first time, oral sex is as an offence
 - Molestation, touching a child, engaging in sexual activity or exposing private parts in front of a child and making a child watch pornography is sexual abuse
 - Any assault on a child below 16 will be considered an offence, irrespective of whether the child had given consent. If the child is 16, her consent will be evidence to book the accused
- Punishment**

Assault Rigorous imprisonment of not less than 12 years with fine or life imprisonment
Abuse: For child below 12, minimum imprisonment 6f five years; for those between 12-16, jail not less than two years; for those above 16, six months

2 Physical abuse: Bullying a child will mean deliberately and persistently intimidating, persecuting, humiliating, or demeaning a child through menacing words or gestures

Punishment

For physical abuse, jail for up to five years and fine, for bullying, Jail up to one year and/or fine or a stint in com-

munity service

3 Corporal Punishment: Family and teachers of child won't be spared. However, scolding or spanking in the interest of the child, which is not persistent, is fine
Punishment: Jail for 2 years and/or fine

4 For false complaints: Antidote to the Bill. Anyone registering a false complaint, say, a parent lying about physical abuse of his child, will invite punishment equivalent to half the punishment for the offence of which complaint is made
(Except for corporal and bullying, sections are non-bailable)

