The government on Friday approved amendments to the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, to bring punishments for sexual assaults on boys on a par with those against girls. These include the provision of death penalty when the child is under 12 years and when a penetrative sexual assault is committed by a relative.

The amendments approved by the Union Cabinet will now have to be passed by Parliament. An official of the Ministry of Women and Child Development said the government intended to introduce the amendment Bill in the Rajya Sabha.

The move will ensure that the Bill, once introduced even if not passed, will not lapse when the term of the present government comes to an end and the Lok Sabha is dissolved.

Kathua rape case
Following the outrage over the gang rape of a minor girl at Kathua in Jammu and Kashmir, the government had brought an ordinance in April and followed it up by passing a Bill in Parliament during the monsoon session to amend the Indian Penal Code. The changes included death penalty for gang rape of a girl under 12 years and 20 years in jail or death penalty for rape of a girl under 12 years.