Learn to defend, survive, women told

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Chennai: Society has not changed to keep up with women's progress, said Jayanthi, acting chairperson, Tamil Nadu State Human Rights Commission.

She was addressing a gathering of women at the inauguration of the programme 'Empowering Working Women: Practical Skills for Safety and Emergency Preparedness' organised by Survival Instincts, safety program provider. Jayanthi said women have made a lot of progress and a large number of them work in IT and other fields that require employees to work at odd hours.

"Though women have progressed and technology has developed, society has not kept up to it," she said adding that it was necessary that women equip them-

PHOTOS: A RAJA CHIDAMBARAM

selves with defence and survival skills.

Apart from such practical skills particularly for working women, Dr Vidyasagar Ramamurthy, Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF, emphasised that it was paramount to have gender sensitisation.

"However educated people might be, there is still a mindset of male domination. We have a law against sexual harassment in workplace.

It requires gender sensitisation along with such training," he said.

K Saraswathi, secretary general, Madras Chamber of Commerce and Industry, appealed to women to learn about the laws that safeguard them, besides making use of them.

"A recent study says Chennai has over 20 per cent of working women population, while in Mumbai it is 19 per cent, Delhi 17 percent and Kolkata lesser than that. There are enough laws and provisions that can safeguard women. My appeal to them is that we all should know about them and be aware of how to use them," she said.

Nina Horowitz, Vice Consul, US Consulate General in Chennai, stressed the need for flexible work timings for women. "What we are teaching here is not self-defence. The focus is on 'Escape' from such situations," said Anoop Madhavan, founder, Survival Instincts, which also launched its search and rescue (SAR) training programme during the workshop.