

LIVING/ARTS



Catching them unawares

unit if an intruder approaches. Both audio as well as visual, the sensors efficiently set off a siren as well as a visual alarm in the security office. Boasts the company's chief executive: "All the burglar alarms in existence are of the prehistoric type. No system in India is as versatile as this one. It updates security, you can cut down the number of security guards by 50 per cent."

The price, however, is not very affordable, for it can go up to Rs 60,000 depending upon the number of sensors used. Undaunted by this a number of banks, multinational companies and mills as well as industrialists and the super-rich in general have invested in it. Negotiations with government undertakings and law en-

forcement agencies are also underway. Says another senior executive of the company: "The Home Ministry has also evinced a keen interest in the system for the purposes of VVIP security. But selling to the government takes a very long time."

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that, "there is no dearth of work. Ours is not a charity and we have an annual turnover of Rs 4 four crore". Echoing this theme, the head of Goliath Detective Agency asserts that "our turnover is increasing every year. I began with one tiny office in Delhi in 1962 and now have 11 offices all over India."

Predictably because there are no detective schools in the country, nor is there is a need to acquire a licence before setting up an agency, there has been a proliferation of small, obscure agencies. These tend to be sleazy one-room tenements with boards outside proclaiming that they offer "Security Services" and "Private Detectives". In actuality, they consist of a bunch of pre-

magnificent necklace belonging to a family member of soft drinks tycoon Charanjit Singh. The case was later taken on by the CBI and is still going on in the New Delhi courts.

While a number of ex-servicemen, some from the Intelligence Bureau, Army, Navy or CID, work with these agencies in an advisory capacity, there are also a host of fresh graduates, 25 per cent of whom are women. The new recruits are put on a six month training initially. Not all of them are educated, for as globe reveals: "We employ all types of undercover agents — from typists and electricians to more highly placed people. You don't have to be Tarzan or Einstein to become a detective", he points out, "nor is

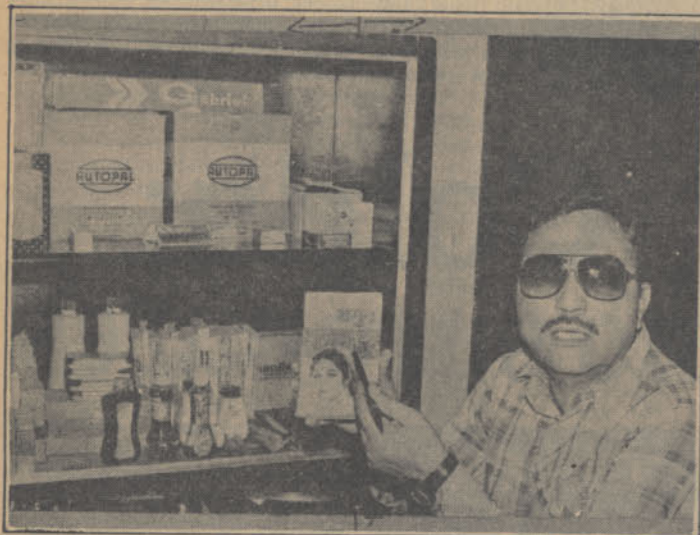
human being. Other cases, though not as exciting, are rewarding. Recently, during the construction of the Indira Gandhi International Airport, in Delhi, Goliath was hired by the Airports Authority to investigate the mysterious disappearance of some construction material. A Goliath officer recounts with a happy smile how they caught the contractor who was stealing some Rs 50,000 worth of cement everyday.

Private detectives are increasingly engaged to investigate cases of spurious products. "Most popular brands available in the market have false counterparts since the genuine manufacturers are not able to meet the increasing demand. Since the false products are of a much lower quality, that's where we are called in", they say. Companies like Escorts, Tata Locomotives and Lakme have, at one time or another, engaged the services of Goliath. The agency was also successful in unearthing a racket almost 10 years ago when books purporting to be by popular Hindi novelist Gulshan Nanda were being ghostwritten and passed off under the novelist's name. They raided eight warehouses in Delhi and recovered thousands of duplicates not only of Gulshan Nanda's but of popular foreign authors like James



A detective at work

# Sleuthing, Indian style



Indian detective agencies, while still lacking the glamour of their western counterparts, are being increasingly resorted to. SUKHMANI SINGH reports

DELHI's prototype Hercule Poirots and Sherlock Holmes have their hands full, not with bizarre murder mysteries but with cases arising out of the banal business of every day life.

While industrial espionage forms the bulk of their business, pre and post matrimonial investigations, property disputes, trademark infringements, insurance claims, verification of employees, are other common tasks that fall

to the lot of Indian detective agencies. That is not all. For one of the most widely advertised of these agencies, the Globe Detective Agency, has diversified into the lucrative business of manufacturing a slick, hi-tech security system which it recently exhibited in Delhi.

This consists of a mind boggling variety of security intrusion-detection sensors, ranging from ultrasonic sensors to photo-electric infra-red sensors and many others, which emit signals to a control



Left: Checking out on spurious goods and right: Staffers of the Goliath Detective Agency: discussing strategy

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maturely retired or court martialled ex-servicemen who are hired out to hotels and embassies as security guards.

"Since there are no set norms or parameters to be met, quacks are bringing disrepute to this profession," says a Globe executive wryly. But Globe itself has a questionable reputation today. Its proprietor, one Prem Kumar, was intercepted by Interpol some months ago on the charge of theft. On a flight from Bombay to London, he was accused of stealing a

there any James Bond glamour attached. Its very hard work."

While other agencies steer clear of handling homicide cases, Goliath makes them something of a speciality. One of its executives claims to "have saved 26 people from hanging so far". Among Goliath's success stories is that of an elderly Sikh of Gandhinagar, Delhi. In 1969, Goliath solved the case in their client's favour by proving that the incriminating blood stains on his kirpan were those of a chicken and not a

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Hadley Chase as well. These ghost writers were paid a mere Rs 250 for each "duplicate" they produced.

Politicians have also realised the advantages of employing detective agencies. At election time, detective agencies get involved in "Election Intelligence" work. Different political parties approach them to snoop on rival parties and report on the kind of posters they are getting printed, how much money they are spending. This information is not only useful, it can also be crucial because if a party exceeds the election expenditure limit, it can be

disqualified.

Yet, as Globe points out: "The bulk of our kitty comes from the corporate sector". With rapid industrialisation and the pervasive dog-eat-dog atmosphere, commercial investigations are becoming all important. Right from locating prospective buyers, finding out where rival manufacturers get their supplies and at what price, down to stealing drawings of technical specifications, industrial espionage is increasingly being resorted to nowadays.

The detective agencies are also active in counter-espionage, locating the moles of another company within a rival organisation. This kind of work, could take from two to three months to complete, and could cost anything from Rs 20,000 to Rs 60,000.

Another indication of changing times and mores is revealed by the increasing numbers of pre and post matrimonial enquiries that agencies handle. Says a Goliath executive: "If earlier we got three or four cases of this type, now we get four times that number". Members of the middle classes are resorting to detectives to enquire

into the character and habits of a prospective bridegroom. Agencies are asked to investigate whether he drinks, takes drugs or is having an affair.

With matrimonial disputes becoming more frequent, husbands seeking a divorce often approach detectives to obtain evidence of adultery. Quite often, as Globe detectives reveal, the attempt is to falsely implicate the wife. On discovering this, the more principled detectives normally refuse to carry on with the case.

Agency fees vary from case to case. Globe officials prefer not to name any figures, but Madan of Goliath has few compunctions in declaring that, "in the '60s, we used to charge a meagre Rs 150 for a small enquiry, whereas now our minimum fees are Rs 1000".

And if external appearances are anything to go by, both the Globe and Goliath offices, complete with upmarket wooden panelling and leather chairs, reflect their affluence. As does the array of cameras, tape recorders and binoculars they are equipped with. Clearly, visibly, sleuthing is good business.