



# THE ECONOMIC TIMES

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A 2-year Lull Ends for Consumer Cos  
Consumer-facing companies are accelerating launches over the next 4-5 months with big back-to-back events: P9

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## Blackmail Victims Dial Private Agents, not Cyber Cops

Fear for privacy as proof may be out in the open if police probe the case

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Bengaluru: Private investigators have come to be a suitable alternative for the victims of cyber blackmail, especially in cases where the nature of the crime involves the privacy of the victim.

According to private investigating agencies, the most common kind of cases brought to them is of online harassment of women and extortion using lewd pictures. As victims take the ad-

ditional precaution of ensuring that the pictures do not go public, they mostly opt for private agencies instead of cybercrime police.

Naman Jain, managing director of Sleuths India, said, "In such cases, if the victim approaches the police, the pictures in question need to be produced as evidence in court during the trial, which they do not want." He added that most cybercrime cases were from metro cities where a cosmopolitan culture is prevalent.

Sometimes, while investigating a case, agencies uncover major offenders. In one such instance, a woman was being blackmailed via email by an anonymous person who possessed her pictures. "We tracked the person and recovered pictures and videos of 17 other girls he was blackmailing," Jain



said. However, it is solely the client's decision whether such offenders should be reported to the police. In this case, as the girl's parents did not want that, the evidence was destroyed.

Bengaluru-based

Detective di-

rector said cases of identity thefts on social media — where the perpetrators were usually IT professionals — are also common. "Only people with specialised knowledge can carry out such hacks and many IT professionals are equipped with it. To resolve such cases, our team again hacks the victim's affected account and hence returns the control to the victim,

Agencies receive two kinds of cases from corporate offices: employees of corporate firms trying to malign other employees by reporting their conduct to the management and employees sending anonymous emails about their a coworker's personal life to everyone in the firm.

Bengaluru-based agency

said out of the 60-70 cases they receive per month, 8-10 are of women being harassed online, for both money and personal reasons. "In some rare cases, ex-boyfriends were found to be the culprits

While carrying out an online search for detective agencies, one finds that cybercrime is one of the four services listed. Agencies too seem to have recognised the potential. However,

Detective Agency, said the agency does not take up cybercrime cases as it does not have access to the required technology to investigate them.

Agencies claim to achieve varied success rates in solving cybercrimes. While Sleuths India said it had a success rate of 70-80%