

CHENNAI

THE HINDU • Thursday, May 29, 2014

Home security in your hand

Instal the right gadgets and home security can be managed even miles away with your mobile phone, says architect Paul Jacob

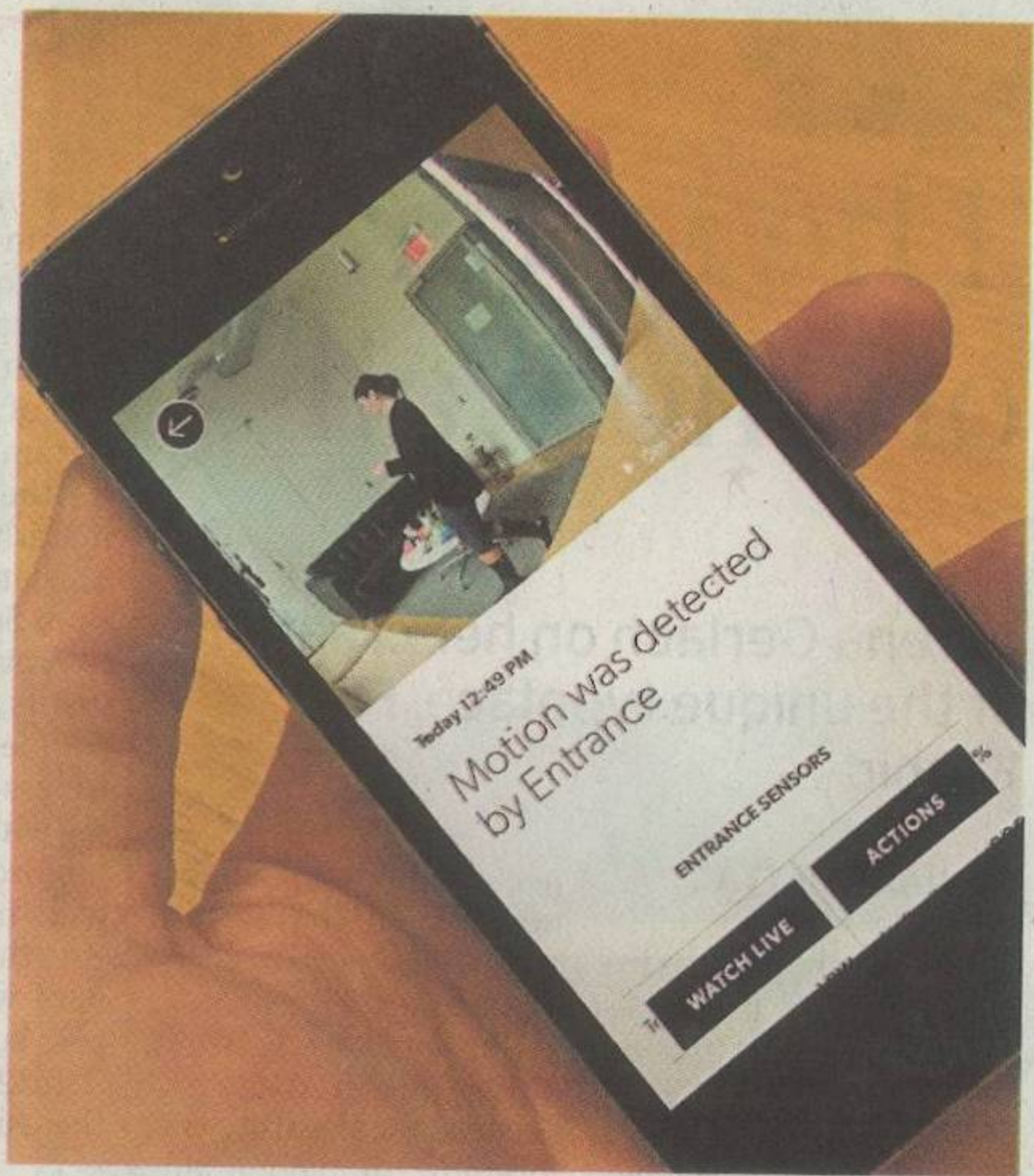
GEETA PADMANABHAN

As he walks me through Buckingham Gardens, a new property at Kanathur, Paul Jacob of Modarchs Architects puts me through a "what if?" questionnaire. What if you want to cool the house before you reach there, or choose the music for special occasions? What if an elder has a medical emergency or there's a fire alarm at home? What if there's an intruder attack? The solution, he offers, could be in your cellphone. Home security, he repeats, is in your hand, at the press of an easily identifiable icon.

Your mobile is your security weapon, say vendors like Smart Living Solutions. Get CCTV, burglar-alarm security alerts to your mobiles through door sensors when forced open, says their website, listing automatic siren activation based on motion-detection, bio-metric security locks, lighting automation as some up-end security options. Now you can remote-control your lights, iPad, tablets and iPhone with an Android-enabled hand-held with Internet connectivity. Of course, customising a room (temperature/sound/light) with a few phone clicks is a given. Systems like these are installed in many large houses in Chennai and in some of the upcoming apartment complexes.

But architects? Do they provide tech solutions for a safe home? "We have designed data centres with high security needs," says Paul. "We are one of the few architects who can talk tech. We aren't dependent on vendors for design inputs." It's better to keep security solutions non-vendor-specific, he says. What if you have to re-wire? What if the vendor folds up?

Entering one of the high-end villas I try to get a hang of how it works. The idea seems to be to keep off trespassers, give access only to a pre-approved group, know what's happening in your home 24/7



and control your state-of-art gadgets from wherever you are. So go ahead and instal monitored fencing, access-controlled gates and boom barriers, and access tags on vehicles to ensure seamless entry. At home, instead of the visually "painful" grills, opt for vibration sensors for opening windows, a magnetic contact-based sensor for doors, and infra-red-wave-based motion detectors for larger openings.

At the perimeter, you verify people and vehicles with a device that captures video images and beams it in for approval. The images are recorded for future use. For people staying within the premises, effective identification is the fingerprint-based one. "The cost of these products has come down," says Paul. It does away with the hassle of carrying cards, remembering PIN numbers. At the block level, the solution changes. (What if you have multiple owners? What if an authorised individual enters a non-authorised zone? Or brings in someone?) A video-approval-based access control followed by a flap

barrier/turnstile will ensure only the approved are let into the block. As for your multi-crore home, you view the visitor from inside or get a message/visual clip on your cellphone if you are away.

Lean back in your chair and control lights, appliances, AC - everything you have installed. You can dictate temperature/fan speed, record TV programmes, and set the time for all these. Emergency call devices can send alerts to family members, hospitals, ambulance services or the police. "There is a solution for every crazy scenario, the options are unlimited. It is up to the user to take it to any level. "How" is the only question." Plan the e-system and get the right gadgets.

So, you drive your car into a crime-free compound? It depends. First, the system should be customised for a need+user skill+usage combo. Next, the user must be serious about learning to work the arrangement, not add it as another showpiece. And surprisingly, "it is the human interface that will make or kill it," says Paul.