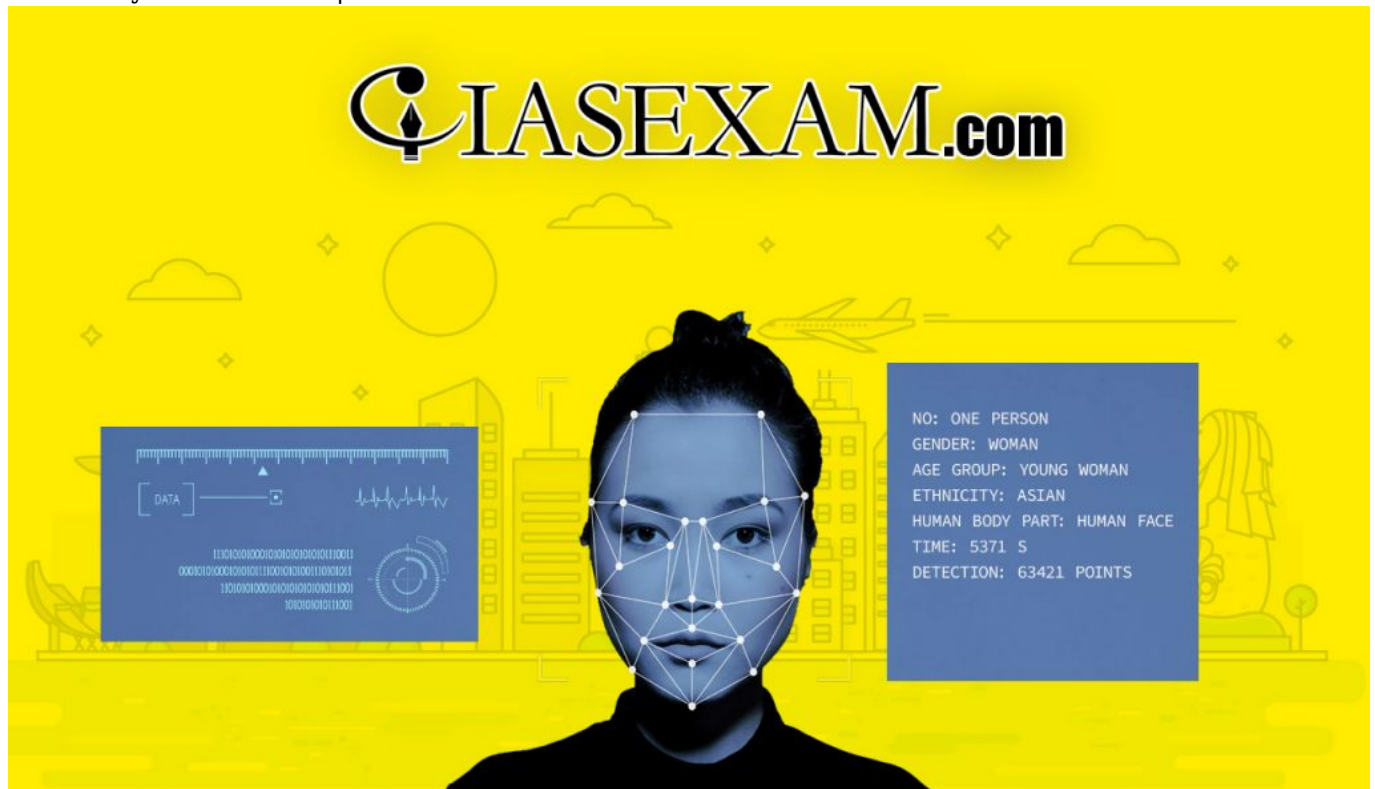


Singapore becomes the first country to attach Facial recognition to the National Database

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Singapore will become the world's first country to use facial verification in its national ID scheme, but privacy advocates are alarmed by what they say is an intrusive system vulnerable to abuse.

From next year, millions of people living in the city-state will be able to access government agencies, banking services and other amenities with a quick face scan.

Key Highlights

- This biometric check will do away with the need to remember a password or security dongle when performing many everyday tasks, its creators say.
- It is part of the financial hub's drive to harness technology, from ramping up the use of electronic payments to research on driverless transport.
- Facial verification has already been adopted in various forms around the world, with Apple and Google implementing the technology for tasks like unlocking phones and

making payments.

- Governments have also deployed it at airports for security checks on travellers. But Singapore's rollout is one of the most ambitious yet, and the first to attach facial verification to a national identification database.
- The technology captures a series of photos of a person's face in various lights. These images are matched with other data already available to the government such as national identity cards, passports, and employment passes.
- The technology is being integrated into the country's digital identity scheme and is being trialled now at some government offices, including the tax authority and the city's pension fund.
- Private firms can sign up for the initiative, and Singapore's biggest bank DBS is part of the trial.
- Face scanning technology remains controversial despite its growing use and critics have raised ethical concerns about it in some countries, for instance, law enforcement agencies scanning crowds at large events to look for troublemakers.
- Singapore authorities are frequently accused of targeting government critics and taking a hard line on dissent, and activists are concerned about how the face scanning tech will be used.

SOURCE: *The Hindu, Hindustan Times*