Facial Recognition Technology
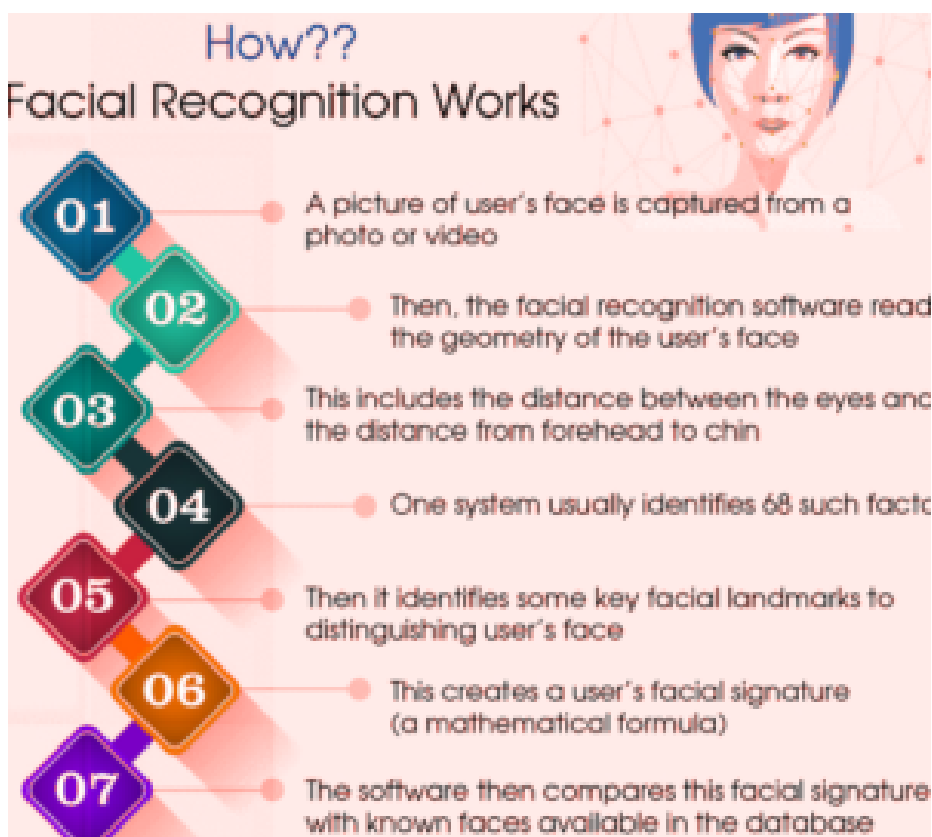
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According to experts, Rapid deployment of facial recognition system by the government without any law in place poses a huge threat to privacy rights and freedom of speech and expression

What is a facial recognition system?

It is a technology capable of matching a human face from a digital image or a video frame against a database of faces, typically employed to authenticate users through ID verification services, works by pinpointing and measuring facial features from a given image.

History of the facial recognition system

- Automated facial recognition was pioneered in the 1960s.

- Woody Bledsoe, Helen Chan Wolf, and Charles Bisson worked on using the computer to recognize human faces.
- Their early facial recognition project was dubbed "man-machine" because the coordinates of the facial features in a photograph had to be established by a human before they could be used by the computer for recognition.

Usage of facial recognition in India

- As of now there are currently 16 different facial recognition tracking (FRT) systems in active utilisation by various Central and State governments across India for surveillance, security or authentication of identity
- However there are no specific laws or guidelines to regulate the use of this potentially invasive technology.
- The Delhi police became one of the first law enforcement agencies in the country to start using the technology in 2018.

Facial recognition system used by China

- Recently a research group found a document signed by representatives of Chinese tech giant Huawei which stated that the company worked on a facial recognition system that would generate a 'Uighur alert' to identify Uighurs in China and notify the authorities.
- As per the document, the artificial-intelligence camera system could scan faces in a crowd and estimate each person's age, sex, and ethnicity.
- The face-scanning system could raise a Uighur alarm and generate an alert if the subject belonged to China's Uighur minority group.
- The government would then keep track of Uighurs when the camera systems identified members of the oppressed minority group.