

Large-scale iris scans a step nearer

BY SARAH HILLS

THEY were used to guard high security vaults in the film Mission Impossible.

But, until now, iris-recognition systems have remained largely in the realm of spy movies, mainly due to a lack of reliable technology.

However, new iris scanners which can be used to fight crime have had a 100 per cent success rate in tests, it has been reported.

The system has performed better and faster than any existing iris-reading systems, scientists said.

The scanners record a person's unique iris pattern, using a computer algorithm.

That is then used to create a unique 'barcode' that can be stored on a database.

Professor Don Monro, one of a team of researchers at Bath Univer-

sity, said: 'The algorithm has been 100 per cent accurate in our initial trials and outperforms the industry standard by a long way.'

Government plans to use face, iris and fingerprint scans as part of its new ID card scheme have faltered following poor results in trials.

Martin George, chief executive of Smart Sensors, which is working with the scientists, said: 'An iris-recognition system is very important in fighting terrorism, illegal immigration or any other instance when you need to confirm somebody's identity.'

However, the new system cannot be marketed in Britain until next year, when a patent on the concept of iris recognition expires.