NEWS LESSON

Singapore's Government Is Trying Matchmaking



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. Would you let a friend choose a date for you?
2. Does having more choice make choosing easier?
3. What would make a dating app feel less tiring?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**pilot**	☐	A	all the people who work in a country or company
2	**questionnaire**	☐	B	a small test of a new idea before it is used widely
3	**algorithm**	☐	C	a set of rules a computer follows to solve a problem
4	**workforce**	☐	D	a natural feeling of attraction between two people
5	**chemistry**	☐	E	a list of questions that people answer on paper or online
6	**stable**	☐	F	people who decide what a government will do
7	**policymakers**	☐	G	looking after children while their parents work
8	**childcare**	☐	H	not likely to change or fall apart

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

Singapore is testing a platform that offers one match at a time. Can a careful algorithm do better than endless swiping?

1 After hours of swiping through profiles, another dating app match may feel less exciting than it should. Singapore's government technology agency has been testing a different approach: instead of offering people an endless stream of possible partners, it introduces them to just one person at a time. The platform, called FirstDate, is still a pilot.

2 The project began among staff at GovTech and is currently being tested with unmarried public officers aged between 21 and 35. Participants complete a questionnaire about their values, routines, interests and preferences. The system then suggests a compatible match and provides a score explaining how closely their answers fit. If both users agree, they can exchange contact details and arrange to meet. Only the proposed match can see a person's profile, and the platform says it does not sell personal data.

3 The technology uses the Gale-Shapley matching method, a mathematical approach designed to produce stable pairings based on people's preferences. It has applications far beyond dating. In this case, however, the result depends on honest answers and human decisions. Two people may look ideal on paper and still have nothing to say to each other over coffee. Matching interests is not the same as creating chemistry.

4 The project has attracted attention because of Singapore's low birth rate and ageing population. Policymakers worry that fewer marriages and births could eventually add up to a smaller workforce and more pressure on public services. The government has a history of supporting matchmaking initiatives, so FirstDate is not entirely unexpected. Nevertheless, its creators describe it as a pilot designed to explore a better dating experience, rather than a guaranteed answer to demographic problems.

5 Critics argue that a dating app cannot solve the reasons some young adults put off long-term relationships or parenthood. Expensive housing, demanding careers and the cost of childcare influence major life decisions. None of those pressures is within the reach of a matchmaking service. Others are uncomfortable with a government-run service collecting sensitive information about relationships, although FirstDate has published privacy safeguards and allows users to decide whether to share contact details.

6 For now, there is no decision about rolling out the scheme beyond public-service workers. Its success may depend less on how clever the algorithm is than on whether users find the experience less exhausting than conventional apps. The technology can offer an introduction and perhaps take the pressure off dating. What happens after that still belongs to the two people meeting for the first time.

Sources: Al Jazeera. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. The system uses a mathematical method for matching people. T F NG
2. Other governments have asked to copy the system. T F NG
3. Strangers cannot browse a participant's profile. T F NG
4. The creators present FirstDate as a guaranteed answer to the birth rate. T F NG
5. Participants are told how closely their answers match their suggested partner's. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

compatible **conventional** **endless** **exhausting** **pointless** **reluctant** **sensitive** **unexpected**

1. There seemed to be an _____ supply of new profiles to look at.
2. Two people who share the same values are more likely to be _____ with each other.
3. Banks must keep _____ information, such as passwords and addresses, private.
4. The journey was so _____ that we slept all afternoon.
5. Some people prefer _____ methods, such as meeting through friends, to using an app.
6. It was an _____ result, so the analysts were surprised.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. By the time the app launched, the designers _____ it for months. (TEST)
2. Under the new rules, users' personal details _____ to advertisers. (NOT SELL)
3. If both users agree, they _____ contact details. (EXCHANGE)
4. Last month I _____ a long profile but never sent it. (WRITE)
5. Experts _____ the results next spring, once the trial has finished. (PUBLISH)

7 Language focus: collocations

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Collocations are words that naturally go together. Check which verb or adjective a noun prefers, because a similar word may sound wrong.

attracted	carry	heavy	raise	reach	take	wide

1. Many couples delay the decision to _____ children until they can afford a bigger home.
2. The pilot has _____ a lot of attention abroad.
3. Long working hours put _____ pressure on young parents.
4. Both sides must _____ a compromise if they want the talks to succeed.
5. A short, simple first meeting can _____ the pressure off both people.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. Would one carefully chosen introduction beat hundreds of profiles?
2. Would government involvement make you trust a dating service more or less?
3. What should people be able to decide without an app's help?

9 Role-play: should I try a one-match dating service?

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the friend who is tired of dating apps

You have used dating apps for months and feel worn out. Your friend suggests a service that gives you one match at a time. You are curious but worried about privacy. Ask questions before you decide.

Student B · the friend with the idea

You read about a service that introduces just one person at a time. You think it could make dating less tiring. Persuade your friend to try it and answer their worries.

Useful phrases

I'm tired of scrolling through hundreds of profiles.
What if it picks someone I don't like?
I'd rather choose for myself.
Who'll be able to see my information?
It couldn't hurt to try it for a month.
Let's see how it goes.

Afterwards, tell the class: did your friend decide to try the service, and why?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 B · 2 E · 3 C · 4 A · 5 D · 6 H · 7 F · 8 G

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 NG · 3 T · 4 F · 5 T

5 Vocabulary

1 endless · 2 compatible · 3 sensitive · 4 exhausting · 5 conventional · 6 unexpected

6 Verb forms

1 had tested or had been testing · 2 are not sold · 3 will exchange or can exchange · 4 wrote · 5 will publish or are going to publish

7 Language focus

1 raise · 2 attracted · 3 heavy · 4 reach · 5 take

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