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## Mains Practice Questions

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**Q.** The issue of multiple time-zones for a country like India keeps resurfacing. In this context, examine the feasibility of multiple time zones in India. (150 words)

16 Dec, 2019 GS Paper 1 Geography

### **Approach**

- Briefly write about probable time zones in India
- Mention need, as well as challenges related to having multiple time zones in India
- Conclude the answer with a forward-looking solution

### **Introduction**

The northeastern states have for a long time been demanding that they have a time zone distinct from the Indian Standard Time (IST), so they can take advantage of the early daylight hours. Moreover, even the National Physical Laboratory (NPL) - India's official timekeeper - has supported a long-standing demand for a separate time zone for eastern states.

### **Body**

- Countries across the world keep different times because of Earth's rotation and revolution around the Sun. As Earth turns by  $15^\circ$  around its axis, time changes by one hour; a 360-degree rotation yields 24 hours. As a result, the world is divided into 24 time zones shifted by one hour each.
- Indian Standard Time is based on longitude  $82.5^\circ$  E, which passes through Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh. It is 5 hours 30 minutes ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT), U.K.

### **Need of multiple time zones for a country like India**

- **Enhanced Efficiency:** Northeast region loses important daylight which can be used productively as the sun rises as early as 4 am in summer and offices open at 10 AM. It will lead to greater efficiency among the workforce and in energy consumption. Advancing IST by just half an hour would result in saving 2.7 billion units of electricity every year by using the daylight hours.
- **Environment-friendly:** Reduction in energy consumption will significantly cut down India's carbon footprint boosting India's resolve to fight climate change.
- **Economically Prudent:** There are also economic benefits to having two different time zones; people will be able to work better and plan better, according to natural cycles.
- **Social Benefits:** Many social policy objectives can be achieved such as reducing road accidents and improving health and women's safety. Many people in India operate in a time zone that is not an appropriate diurnal cycle for them. People's productivity and efficiency follow a biological clock that is synchronized with the daily light- dark cycles.

### **Challenges**

- **Implementation:** Mismatch in office timings, different working hours for banks and a chance that railway accidents might become more frequent. Implementing two time zones will require synchronizing railway traffic which otherwise will create utter confusion. Marking of the dividing line of the two zones would be a problem.
- **Political Consequences:** Already India is divided on the lines of religion, caste, race, language, etc. Multiple time zones may further introduce a new fault line.

### **Way forward**

- Alternatives like shifting of IST by one hour, Daylight Saving Time (wherein the time in the clock is adjusted forward in spring & is readjusted backward in autumn) can also be considered. The government meanwhile must gather data and track changes in economic activity pattern of the nation.
- Nevertheless, in a heterogeneous and diverse country like India, it is important to consult all stakeholders and arrive at a better solution so as to use the lost light hours that are dimmed by a common IST.