



Mains Practice Question

Q. Examine the feasibility and challenges of having two time zones in India. (250 words)

03 Apr, 2019 GS Paper 1 Geography

Approach:

- Write briefly about the existing standard time zone and the problems associated with it in North eastern region.
- Write the benefits of two time zones.
- Write the problems associated with two time zones.
- Suggest a way forward to resolve the issue of two zones.

Answer:

Introduction

India stretches nearly 3000 km from the east to the west. There are about **28 degrees of longitude** between the country's eastern and western extremities which results into **approximately two hours time difference** between the westernmost and the easternmost point. Indian Standard Time (calculated on the basis of **82.5' E longitude, in Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh**), does not affect most of the Indians, except those who live in the Northeast region where the sun rises around 4 a.m. in summer, and gets dark well before 4 p.m. in winter. So the Northeast region has long complained about the effect of a single time zone on their lives and their economies.

Recently Council of Scientific & Industrial Research's National Physical Laboratory (**CSIR-NPL**), which maintains Indian Standard Time (IST), published a research suggesting two time zones and two ISTs in India: **IST-I** for most of India and **IST- II** for the North-eastern region - separated by difference of one hour.

Body:

Benefits of two Time Zones

- It will lead to greater efficiencies among the workforce and on energy consumption. Reduction in energy consumption will significantly cut down India's carbon footprint boosting India's resolve to fight climate change.
- There are economic benefits in having two different time zones as people will be able to work better and plan better, according to natural cycles.
- Many social policy objectives can be achieved such as reducing road accidents and improving women's safety.
- Two time zones will allow aligning standard time with daylight time.

Problems with two time Zones

- There will be mismatch in office timings and different working hours for banks.
- Implementing two time zones will require synchronizing railway traffic which otherwise will create utter confusion and there's a chance that railway accidents might become more frequent.
- With significant illiteracy levels, if the country were divided into two time zones, there would be chaos at the border between the two zones. It would mean resetting clocks with each crossing of the time zone.
- Marking of the dividing line of the two zones would be a problem.
- Two time zones can have adverse political consequences as India apart from getting divided on the lines of religion, caste, race, language, etc, now will get divided on the lines of Time Zones.

The need of the hour is to initiate a process of consultation to consider all aspects regarding the Indian time zone afresh. Proposal of some researchers to set the IST forward by half an hour so that it is six hours ahead of Universal Coordinated Time can be examined and debated. This will mean advancing the IST from 82.5 degree East to 90 degree East, which will fall at a longitude along the West Bengal-Assam border would go some way in meeting Assam's demand, and help avoid potential grievances from northwestern India about corresponding inconveniences caused by advancing by one full hour.

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