

One clock for India: Govt mandates IST for official and commercial use

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New rules seek to bring India's critical infrastructure under one accurate time reference, with systems required to synchronise with authorised Indian timing sources



India has mandated Indian Standard Time as the single reference for official and commercial use. (Photo: Pexels)

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The government has moved to make [Indian Standard Time](#) (IST) the country's single official time reference, bringing banks, telecom networks, power systems, transport services and government institutions under a common framework for accurate timekeeping.

The Department of Consumer Affairs notified the Legal Metrology (Indian Standard Time) Rules, 2026, on August 27, set to take effect 180 days after Official Gazette publication.

Why has the government mandated one standard time?

Modern systems rely heavily on precise timestamps, as even a small difference between clocks can create problems when transactions, communications or technical failures need to be tracked.

For instance, banks and digital payment platforms need accurate timestamps to establish when a transaction was attempted, while stock exchanges and other financial systems depend on precise sequencing of orders. Similarly, power networks need reliable time records to investigate faults and coordinate operations.

A single, reliable time reference across these and other critical systems is therefore expected to improve coordination and reduce discrepancies. The government said the move will support:

- Accurate timestamps for banking and digital payment transactions
- Coordination of railways, airports and other transport systems
- Reliable operation of telecom and internet networks
- Accurate timekeeping across power systems
- Maintenance of government and legal records
- Coordination of emergency and other time-sensitive services

How will India disseminate accurate IST?

Indian Standard Time is maintained by the CSIR-National Physical Laboratory (CSIR-NPL), which serves as the country's national timekeeper. The government is now building infrastructure to distribute this reference time more widely through Indian institutions and regional laboratories.

For the dissemination of IST, time dissemination laboratories are being set up at five Regional Reference Standard Laboratories (RRSLs) in Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Bhubaneswar, Faridabad and Guwahati, in collaboration with the National Physical Laboratory (NPL) and Isro.

A White Rabbit technology-based IST dissemination network was also commissioned at the Bengaluru laboratory in July 2026. The technology enables highly accurate synchronisation of clocks across connected systems, and the network has already demonstrated secure transmission of IST to the National Stock Exchange's Chennai facility.

The new rules also provide for Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC), India's satellite navigation system, and other approved Indian timing sources to be used for reliable time dissemination.

When will the new IST rules take effect?

The Legal Metrology (Indian Standard Time) Rules, 2026, will take effect 180 days after their publication in the Official Gazette, which places implementation in early 2027.

The intervening period will allow government departments, businesses and institutions to review their existing systems and make the technical changes needed to comply with the new framework.

Sector-specific accuracy standards and compliance advisories are also expected to provide further details on how different industries will implement the rules.

What will change for banks, telecom and other sectors?

Under the new framework, government departments and public institutions will have to display IST on their timekeeping devices and synchronise their systems using approved Indian timing sources.

Regulated sectors including banking, capital markets, telecommunications and power must also ensure their operational systems trace their time to authorised Indian sources. This means critical systems will increasingly move away from relying solely on foreign satellite signals or external time servers.

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