

Recently deposed Saudi crown prince **Mohammed bin Nayef** has been barred from leaving the kingdom and is said to be confined to his palace, P 20

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Let there be more light: Advance India's clocks by half an hour for big economic, social and health benefits

Faisal Farooqui



On March 13 this year, Guwahati high court dismissed a PIL seeking a separate time zone for northeast India including Assam. The northeast has for long demanded a separate time zone to have more sunlight during daytime hours. But is having two time zones the right answer?

A much better solution is to change the standard time of India. Our nation's time is set as five and half hours ahead of GMT. Now, there are many benefits of having the entire country on a single time zone, but equally there are drawbacks.

People living in northern and eastern parts of the country wake up really early in summer and enjoy sunlight only for few hours in winter. For instance, in December, sunset in Kolkata is at 4.54pm while in Mumbai, on the same day, sunset is at 6.04pm. In June, sunrise in Kolkata is at 4.52am while in Mumbai, on the same day, the sun rises at 6.01am.

A vast country like India will always have a problem with a single time zone, hence the recurring demand for multiple time zones. Further, in the Americas and Europe, many countries adjust their timings every winter and summer by changing their clocks backward and forward by an hour, also called Daylight Savings Time.

I reckon that both are not feasible for India. Having more than one time zone will create

Once we shift to GMT+06.00, the sun will rise a little later and people in the north and east will get a little more sleep in the summer. Everyone will also get extra sunlight in the evening

unnecessary confusion. For example, our railway schedules, signalling and track utilisation will be a nightmare to manage. We are a continuous and a highly mobile country. Assuming we



go back to the pre-Independence system of two time zones dividing the country into east and west, it will be a nightmare to adjust to Western or Eastern India time zone in our social and business interaction.

The Daylight Savings Time solution on the other hand is an annual madness. In fact, many countries that have been religiously following DST every year are now recognising the problems and are thinking of a permanent shift to DST, instead of moving clocks every winter. Russia for example abolished DST in 2014.

Rejecting the above two

solutions, everybody in India can enjoy more sunlight simply by advancing the time by 30 minutes, permanently moving IST to GMT+06.00 hours. The implementation of this proposal cannot be simpler; on a certain pre-announced date, everybody will simply advance their clock by 30 minutes. Disruptions, if any, will not last even 24 hours.

Once we shift to GMT+06.00, the sun will rise a little later and people in the north and east will get a little more sleep in the summer. The sun will also set late, and everyone will get extra 30 minutes of sunlight

in the evening.

Moving our clock ahead by 30 minutes will have tremendous economic, social and health benefits. I have personally interacted and talked to many scientists who are unanimously in favour of this shift. One study published at Indian Institute of Advanced Science, Bengaluru said that by advancing our time by 30 minutes, we could save more than Rs 4,000 crore worth of electricity.

Social scientists on the other hand believe that a late sunset will reduce crimes—since criminals prefer post-sunset darkness to the morning hours. Health experts believe that a late sunset will give people more daylight time with their families after work and increase outdoor recreation. This will lead to a healthy lifestyle and more holistic health.

As a country, we have nothing to lose in advancing our time. Yes, we will be six hours ahead of London, but then a nation of 125 crore will enjoy more sunlight.

The writer is CEO of MouthShut.com and convener of MoreSunlight.in