

Making every second count: The creation of Indian Standard Time at Delhi's NPL

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From February 2027, Indian Standard Time — ascertained in one room in Delhi — will become the country's only legal time. This requires that IST be drawn from an authorised Indian source. Getting there means audits of every bank, telco, and data centre, and reviving India's homegrown satellite network, finds Jacob Koshy

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National Physical Laboratory (NPL) Director Venu Gopal Achanta and Poonam Arora, Scientist G, during a conversation at NPL in New Delhi. | Photo Credit: Shashi Shekhar Kashyap

Indian Standard Time (IST) is created at the CSIR-National Physical Laboratory (NPL) in a room the size of an office cubicle, on a sprawling Delhi campus, not far from where the Green Revolution took root. Created, not in the Einsteinian way of space and gravity doing mysterious things, nor in the pejorative way about Indian time being stretchable. Time here emerges as a consensus of a parliament of clocks.

Parliament is not stretching the comparison. NPL's foundation stone was laid in 1947 and its building opened in 1950, the year India brought its Constitution to effect. No other institution clocks itself so exactly to the nation's origin. On 27 August, the Department of Consumer Affairs notified the Legal Metrology (Indian Standard Time) Rules, 2026, which make [IST the only permissible time reference in the country](#) for legal, administrative, commercial and official purposes, require that it be drawn from an authorised Indian source, and come into force in the last week of February 2027.

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