



THE HINDU ANALYSIS

19th March 2024

by saurabh
pandey



THE HINDU



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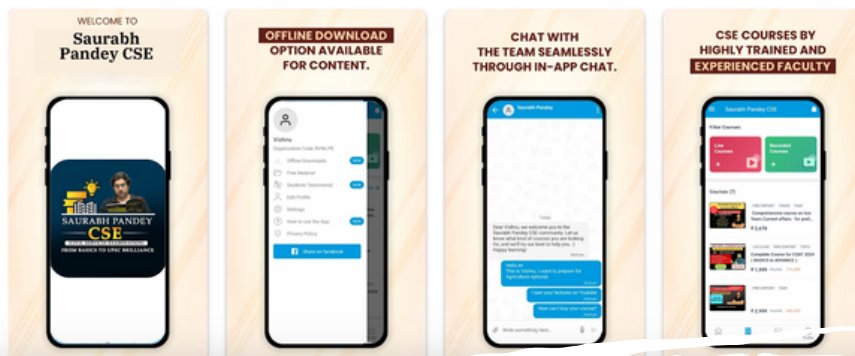


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Geologists can't agree when the Anthropocene began, but it did

A closer examination of the archaeological and historical antecedents of human impacts reveals that while humans have left an indelible mark on the natural environment over the ages, they reached a state of heightened activity only since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution

C. P. Rajendran

Scientists recently proposed formalising an 'Anthropocene Epoch' on the geologic time scale, triggering several debates. The earth's geological history is divided into multiple epochs depending on their natural character. We are officially currently in the Holocene Epoch, which started around 11,700 years ago. But many scientists believe the Holocene Epoch has ended and the Anthropocene Epoch has started - a period of time characterised by humankind's large-scale effects on the earth, including climate change and pollution.

The proposal - to make the Anthropocene Epoch official - came from the Anthropocene Working Group of the Sub-commission of Quaternary Stratigraphy (SQS-AWG). In the proposal, the group has said the start date of the Epoch can be linked to the formation of a particular layer of the ground. As the earth's surface evolves, new layers of rock, soil, and other materials are deposited on old ones. Each layer, or stratum, is thus a marker of a previous era.

The SQS-AWG is a commission responsible for recognising time units within our most recent period of geologic time. Its members have been looking into the question of formalising the Anthropocene Epoch as the youngest epoch, superseding the Holocene. On March 4, 2024, the commission, which consists of topical experts, rejected the proposal with a majority voting against it. They believed that adding a new Anthropocene Epoch and ending the Holocene Epoch was not supported by the scientific standards geologists follow to define geological time intervals. But the rejection did not settle the issue.

How long has the Epoch been under study?

The Dutch atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen coined the term 'Anthropocene'. Dr. Crutzen had won a Nobel Prize in 1995 for his discovery of the ozone hole in the earth's atmosphere and its cause. Five years later, at a meeting during the 15th Scientific Committee meeting of the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme (IGBP) in Cuernavaca, Mexico, he co-authored an article with marine biologist Eugene Stoermer in a newsletter. Here, he defined a putative geological epoch to mark the start of human's transformation of the planet. Later, thanks to an article in *Nature* in 2002, Dr. Crutzen was able to garner wider acceptance for his neologism. He also suggested the onset of the Anthropocene Epoch coincide with the Industrial Revolution from the late 18th century.

There are conceptual antecedents of the term 'Anthropocene' in older literature. In *Man and Nature* (1864), the American polymath George Perkins Marsh presented perhaps the first major, and prescient, discussion of the anthropogenic changes wrought by human activities. The Italian geologist and priest Antonio Stoppani, in a book published between 1865 and 1870, referred to an "Anthropozoic" era in stratigraphic terms.



Experts have rejected a proposal to mark the start of the Anthropocene Epoch in 1952, when the first layer containing radioactive fallout from Cold War hydrogen bomb tests formed. The photograph shows a moment from the U.S.'s Castle Bravo thermonuclear weapon test on March 1, 1954. U.S. GOVERNMENT

At the close of the nineteenth century, Svante Arrhenius and Thomas Chamberlain were exploring the relationship between carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere and global warming. In an article published posthumously by the journal *American Scientist* in January 1945, Vladimir I. Vernadsky, the Russian-Ukrainian geoscientist defined the "Anthropogenic Era" in rather optimistic terms. In those heady days of Soviet communism, man/woman was expected to always be able to triumph over nature.

When was the Epoch to commence?

The rejected proposal, which has been in discussion for many years, suggested commencing the Anthropocene Epoch in 1952, when the first layer containing radioactive fallout from Cold War hydrogen bomb tests formed. Those opposed to the proposal have argued that large-scale, anthropogenic changes have been in the making for millennia and can't be ascribed to singular events.

The proposal also risked sowing confusion about the deep history of how humans are transforming the planet. The human impact was evident when the sabre-toothed cats began to disappear from North America and the woolly mammoths from Siberia about 10,000 years ago. Human activities also became more visible in the 'fertile crescent' of West Asia midway through the Holocene Epoch, about 6,000 years ago, with the rise of agriculture and deforestation to make way for farmland.

Since then, humans have developed many technologies capable of manipulating the environment, including mechanisation, irrigation, groundwater extraction, damming, and the industrial production of nitrogen-rich fertilisers. Even around 1850, the concentrations of two major greenhouse gases, carbon



As the earth's surface evolves, new layers of rock, soil, and other materials are deposited on old ones. Each layer, or stratum, is thus a marker of a previous era

dioxide and methane, were rising at an accelerated rate. These compounds can modify the environment such that it becomes unfriendly to many forms of life.

Significance of post-Industrial era?

However, a closer examination of the archaeological and historical antecedents of human impacts reveals that while humans left an indelible mark on the natural environment over the ages, they reached a state of heightened activity only since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. For example, consider four important markers of the Anthropocene Epoch.

The first is temperature - specifically, the predicted increase in the global average surface temperature, at least by 1.1 degrees but possibly by as much as 6.4 degrees C by the end of this century (which would be an all-time high since the last thermal maximum 40 million years ago). Second, the quickening extinction of various species at a scale similar in magnitude to a major extinction event that occurred 80 million years ago.

Third, a dramatic increase in the erosion and the denudation of continents, at a pace an order of magnitude greater than what one would expect from purely natural processes. Finally, both accelerating urbanisation, land-use changes, and pro-urban migration have been accompanied by perennial water depletion and shortage. Over the last

century or so, many major rivers that have been dammed and diverted have lost their water-carrying capacity.

While the SQS-AWG rejected the proposal to use the stratigraphic marker corresponding to the radioactive fallout, it need not reject the possibility of an Anthropocene Epoch or a representative stratigraphic period altogether. The Epoch may well have begun with the Industrial Revolution, around 1760. The resulting evidence of human impact is now preserved in geological material in the form of fallout from nuclear bomb tests as well as microplastics, pesticides, the bodies of invasive species, and more.

In fact, the argument that the rejection of the Anthropocene Epoch proposal is because of the fairly recent date of commencement and its shallow depth misses the larger picture. When Dr. Crutzen proposed the term 'Anthropocene', it was an accepted fact that humans had been altering the functioning and geological record of the earth, but it wasn't until the 18th century that the whole earth system began to rapidly destabilise, posing an existential threat to all biological entities in less than a century.

The information drilled from glaciers and ice-sheets adds to this picture: the atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases and global temperature surged sharply and unprecedentedly for the first time in the post-Industrial era as well as in 30,000 years. Even if the human-induced increase began millennia ago, it entered a new phase in this century - a phase that has also brought to bear consequences that are unique to this century.

(C.P. Rajendran is an adjunct professor at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru, and director of the Consortium for Sustainable Development, Inc., Connecticut.)



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Anthropocene Epoch

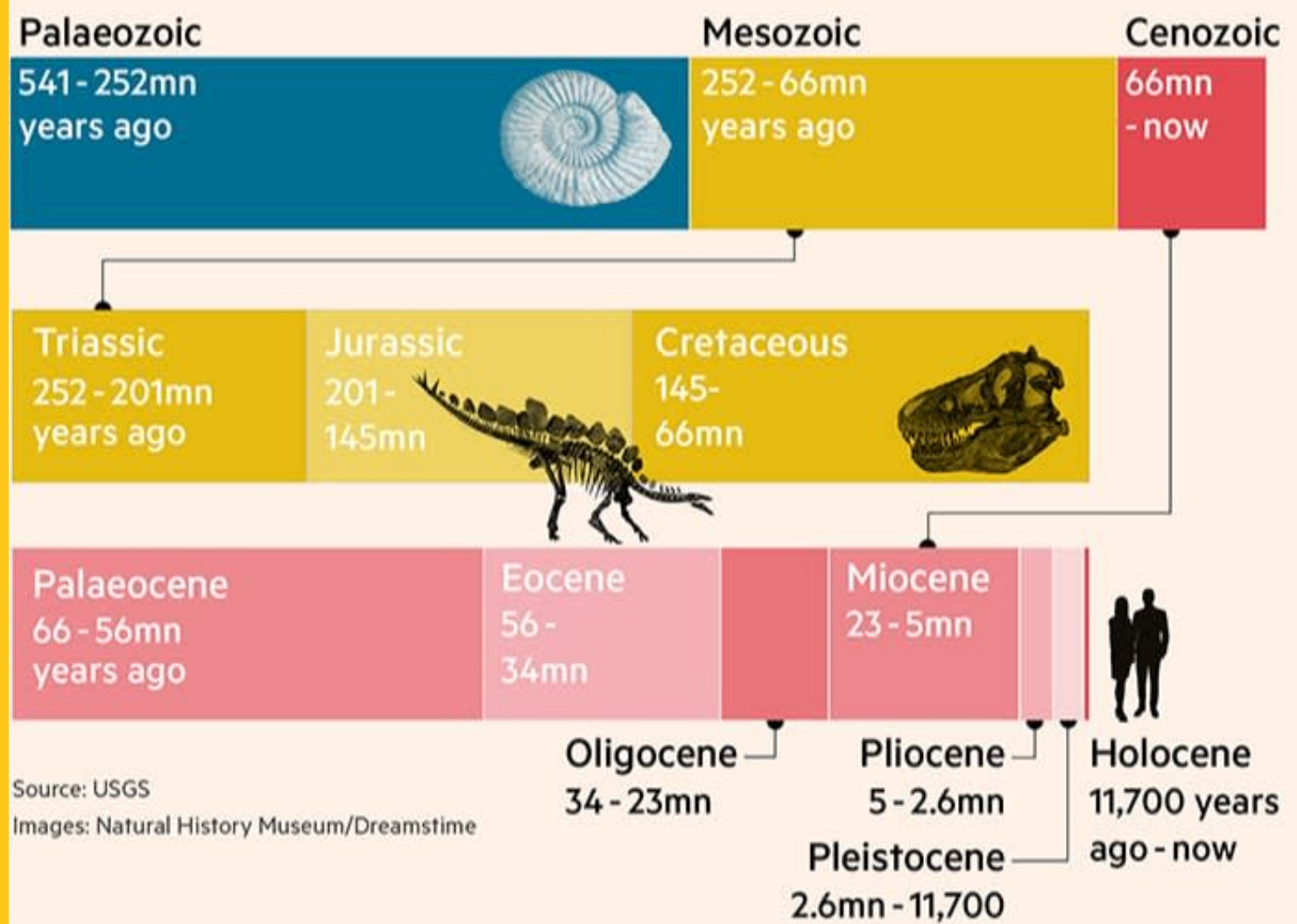
- The proposal – to make the Anthropocene Epoch official – came from the Anthropocene Working Group of the Sub-commission of Quaternary Stratigraphy (SQS-AWG).
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- The SQS-AWG is a commission responsible for recognising time units within our most recent period of geologic time.
- Its members have been looking into the question of formalising the Anthropocene Epoch as the youngest epoch, superposing the Holocene

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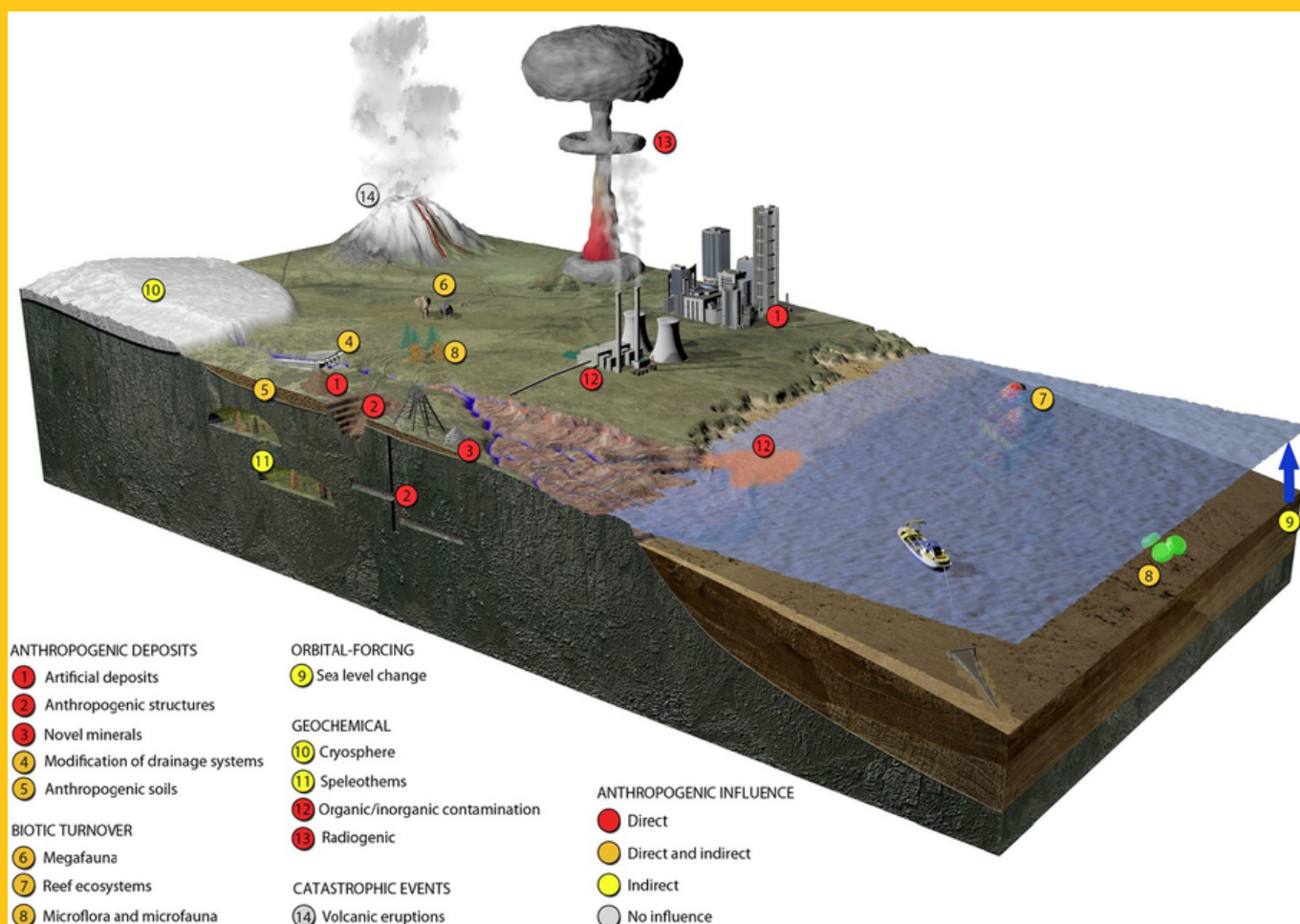


The road to the Anthropocene epoch

Eras since life on Earth began



- The Anthropocene is a proposed geological epoch dating from the commencement of significant human impact on Earth until now.
- It affects Earth's geology, landscape, limnology, ecosystems and climate.
- The effects of human activities on Earth can be seen for example in biodiversity loss and climate change.



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estimated by environmental agencies, a report published on Thursday found, raising questions over pollution and consumer safety.

While the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) had previously identified around 13,000 plastic chemicals, the report by a team of European scientists found more than 16,000 chemicals in plastics – a quarter of which are thought to be hazardous to human health and the environment.

The report, funded by the Norwegian Research Council, comes as government negotiators grapple with devising the world's first treaty to tackle mounting plastic pollution, as some 400 million tonnes of plastic waste are produced every year.

“To robustly solve plastic pollution, you actually have to look at the full life cycle of plastics and you have to address the chemicals issue,” said report co-author Jane Muncke, managing director of the Swiss nonprofit Food Packaging Forum.

That's because plastic chemicals can leach into water and food.

“We're finding hundreds, if not thousands, of plastic chemicals in people now and some of them have been linked to adverse health outcomes,” Muncke said.

Such impacts include fertility issues and cardiovascular disease.

Often producers don't know which kind of chemicals they have in their products and it



Plastic Pollution

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All eyes are now on the Indian Ocean region

While the Indian government's focus from January 2021 was fixed on the Indo-Pacific with a sustained endeavour to strengthen the Quad, policy attention has shifted back to the Indian Ocean since October 2023. Of course, the Indo-Pacific strategy covers both the Pacific and Indian Oceans, but when danger deepens, the immediate neighbourhood matters more than distant shores.

The policy shift

The Maldives, with Mohamed Muizzu as President, seems to be heading on a collision course with India. Despite New Delhi's patience and diplomatic tact, Male continues to deepen its embrace of China. In contrast, Sri Lanka showed greater sensitivity to India's security concerns by imposing a year-long moratorium on foreign research ships, including Chinese ones, to its ports. Last month, India's SAGAR policy produced a valuable dividend as the Prime Ministers of India and Mauritius inaugurated a new airstrip and a jetty in the Agaléga Islands, boosting Mauritius's capability to curb illegal activities in its vast Extended Economic Zone.

Both the Western Indian Ocean littered with island nations and the Northern Indian Ocean stretching from the Arabian Sea to the Suez have become active geographies again. The gradual regionalisation of the Israel-Hamas conflict, as reflected in the attacks by Houthis rebels on international shipping, has now led to a massive drop in transits through the Suez Canal. The diversion of ships to the longer route around the Cape of Good Hope adversely affects all nations in the region, big or small.

The new chain of developments is set to expand the Chinese Navy's footprint in the region. Its broad objective is to assert dominance. With the Maldives as a willing partner, Beijing lost little time in announcing a new agreement under which unspecified military



Rajiv Bhatia

is Distinguished Fellow Gateway House, is a former ambassador and the author of 'India-Africa Relations: Changing Horizons'

assistance would be extended gratis to Maldives. This comes when 88 Indian military personnel, deployed with the host nation's consent to operate humanitarian flights of three aviation platforms, has been replaced by a civilian group.

The strategic contestation between China and India is intensifying. Much of China's trade and energy supplies pass through the region, so its case for security for its supply routes cannot be dismissed. But what is worrisome is its strategic intent to create an adverse environment for India's security by turning the country's neighbours against it. A clear pattern is emerging behind Beijing's quest for naval bases in Djibouti, Kyaukphyu, Gwadar, and Hambantota. This, combined with the nearly four-year-old border standoff, which has defied a diplomatic resolution, has meant the two nations continue to confront each other as adversaries.

India has been facing a "bully" in a very "determined manner," observed India's defence secretary recently. He spoke not only of the border situation but also of the Indo-Pacific where "a pivotal moment" was being witnessed. India and the U.S., he underlined, were key stakeholders in the Indo-Pacific region. Cooperation helps them in addressing the strategic competition with China. Collaboration in underwater domain awareness has been identified as a key goal in dealing with the "emerging" threats.

Besides the U.S., where do the U.K., European Union, France, and Germany stand as far as Indian Ocean rivalries are concerned? Geographic proximity to the region demands that they take a clear line on China's activities. While they are concerned about Beijing's illegal claims in the South China Sea, they must see that a similar kind of assertiveness and hostile intent is building up in the Indian Ocean too. Each of these players seeks closer economic and security

cooperation with India, and incremental progress is taking place. But they display a 'studied ambiguity' when it comes to interpreting China's behaviour and the long-term motivations driving it. The geographic distance of the European nations from China gives them a sense of security. They should re-examine the fundamental tenets of their Asia strategy. But will they, given their excessive preoccupation with the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza? Recent interactions with European officials and scholars generate limited hope; therefore, the task to persuade them must go on.

India's other options

The government has other options too. First, India needs to convey a clear message to its strategic partners that while it is conscious of its Indo-Pacific responsibilities, it prioritises the Indian Ocean region. Second, a critical audit of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Colombo Security Conclave (CSC) is needed. While IORA is underperforming and has become too amorphous to be effective, the CSC faces the danger of losing a key member, the Maldives, if the island nation's partnership with China deepens. It may be time for New Delhi to encourage the creation of a new mechanism with the objective of bolstering maritime security and optimising the potential for the Blue Economy. This group could comprise four nations from the neighbourhood (India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Myanmar) and four island states (Mauritius, Seychelles, Comoros, and Madagascar). The ninth seat may be kept for the Maldives if it adopts a sensible policy. This group can be named the 'Indian Ocean Cooperation Organisation.' Third, *Foreign Affairs Insights & Review* ranked the Indian Navy the seventh most powerful in the world. As India aims to become the third largest economy, it should find new budgetary resources for its Navy to make it the third or fourth strongest.

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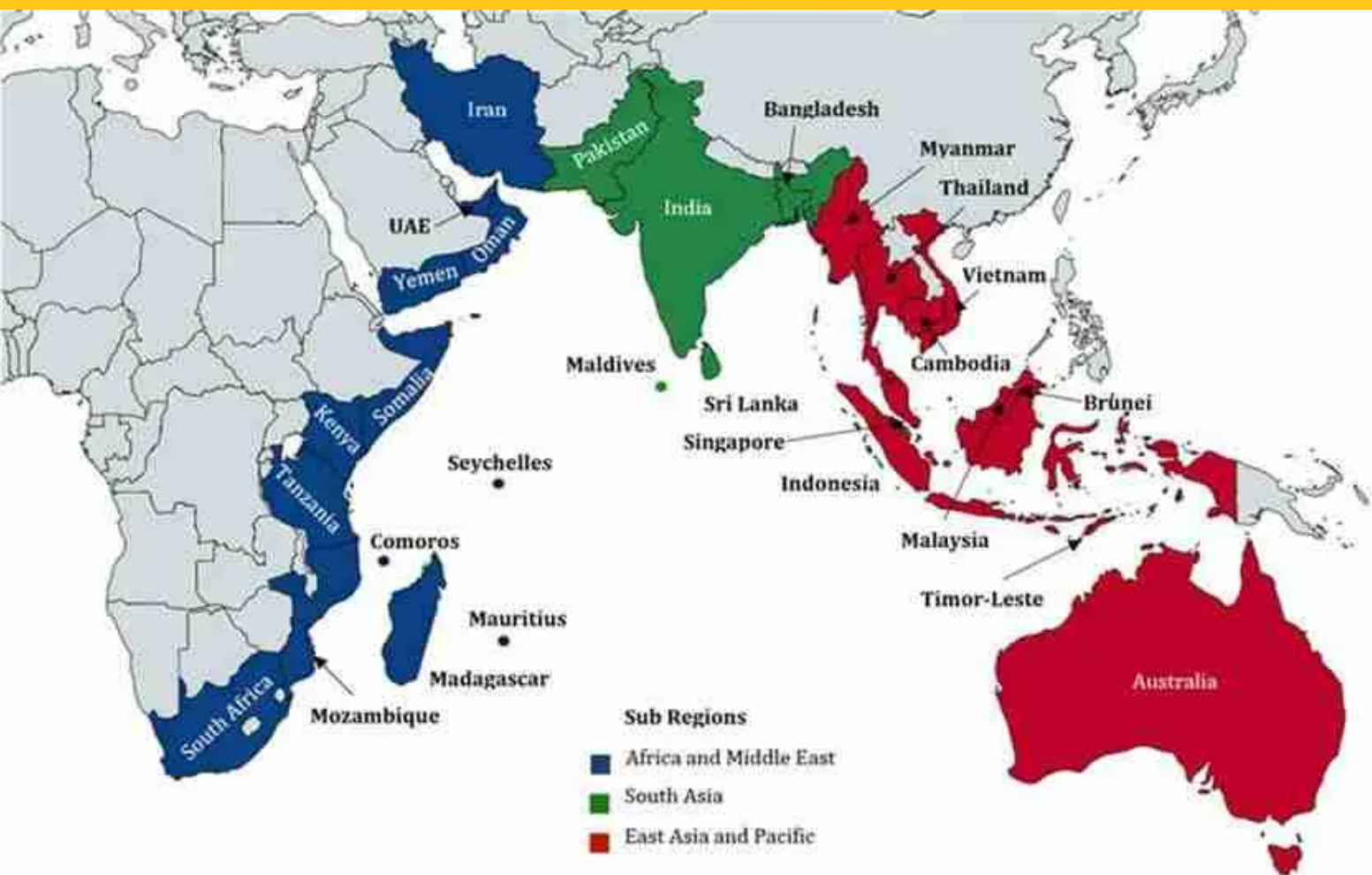
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India In Indian ocean region

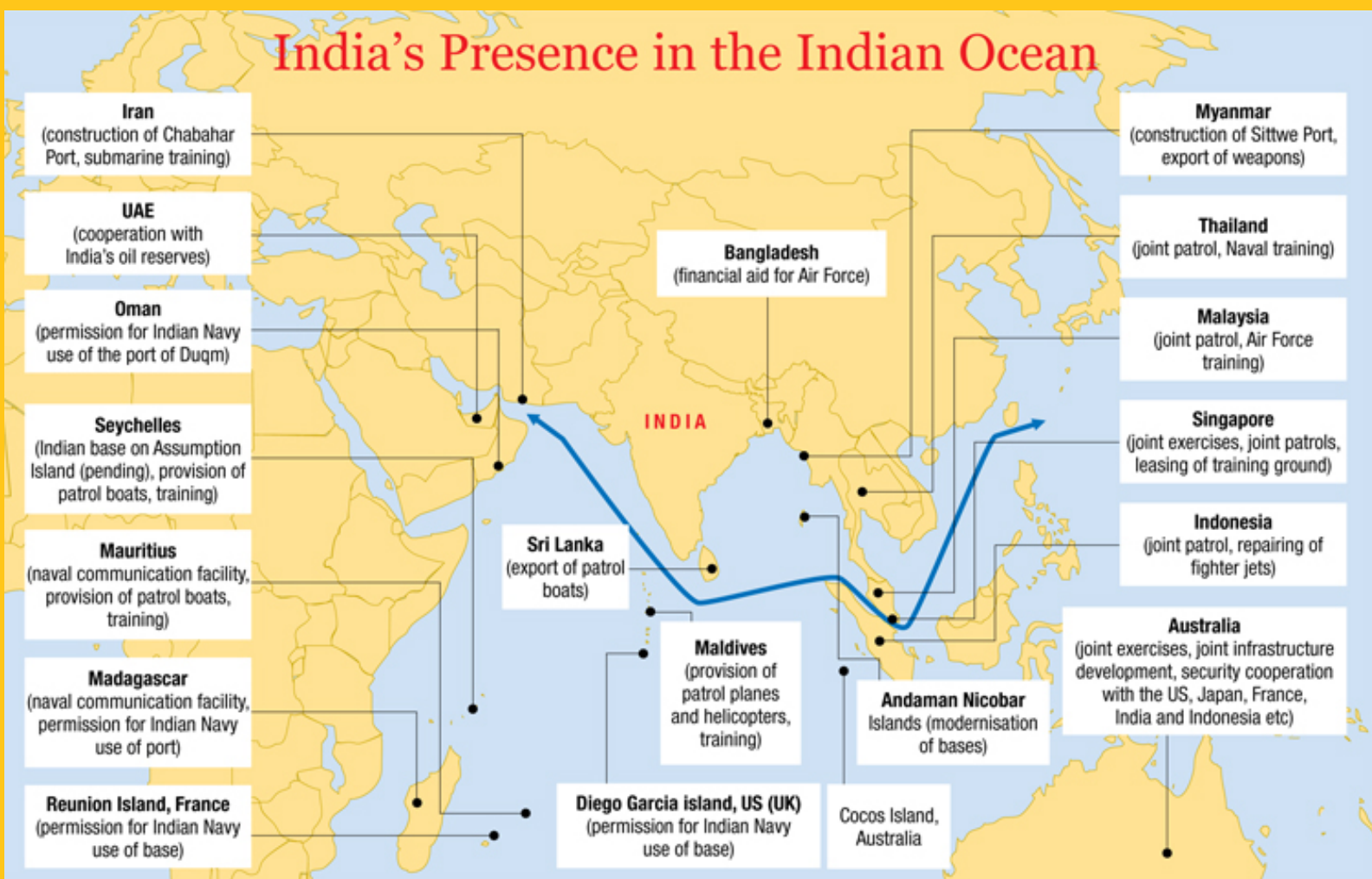
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India's Presence in the Indian Ocean



Chinese Port Investments in the Indian Ocean Region



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On FTAs with European countries

What are the key components? For trading partners, is a Free Trade Agreement with India attractive because they can surpass India's high tariff walls to access a large market? What are the other challenges at a time of rising protectionism across both developed and developing countries?

EXPLAINER

R.V. Anuradha
Ajay Srivastava

The story so far:

The India-EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) is the latest in India's recent Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). As its name suggests, the thrust of the FTA is deeper economic engagement with the EFTA (European Free Trade Association) countries – Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. It heralds the westward tilt of India's FTAs, being the first with any European country and the western world.

What does this mean?

The successful conclusion of an FTA with developed countries including Switzerland and Norway is a significant positive signal to the world, showcasing India's firm commitment to trade liberalisation at a time of rising protectionism across both developed and developing countries. For trading partners, an FTA with India is very attractive since it represents surpassing India's high tariff walls to access a large market. The TEPA negotiations started almost 15 years back; however, these were rapidly concluded in the last few months, close on the heels of the swift conclusion of FTAs with Australia and the UAE. The FTAs with the U.K. and the EU are also reportedly at an advanced stage.

What are the key features of TEPA?

Investment: TEPA sets out a target of a \$100 billion investment into India from EFTA countries, and consequent one million jobs over a 15-year period. It also provides India the ability to withdraw its tariff concessions if such expected investment is not achieved. A closer look at the legal text reveals that for the promised investments and jobs to materialise, two conditions need to be met: India growing at a fast rate of 9.5%, and the return on EFTA investments in India exceeding 16% annually over the 15-year timeline. If not, both sides may lower their level of ambitions. If India is not satisfied, it can pull back its tariff concessions in a proportionate manner after 18 years. The investment chapter is not subject to dispute resolution and is overall, a statement of positive intent, and its benefits will be dependent on the private sector's responsiveness to the TEPA.

Trade in goods: the chief gain here is for EFTA's market, which can have more access to India due to tariff concessions. India is mandated to eliminate tariff on most products within seven to 10 years. This will benefit EFTA exports of seafood like tuna and salmon, fruits like olives and avocados, coffee capsules, oils like cod liver and olive oil, and a variety of sweets and processed foods including chocolate and biscuits. Also covered are smartphones, bicycle parts, medical equipment, clocks, and watches, many medicines, dyes, textiles, apparels, iron and steel products, and most machinery. Additionally, tariffs on cut and polished diamonds will be reduced from 5% to 2.5% in five years. For wines, India has extended tariff cuts as follows: wines priced between \$5 and less than \$15 will see a duty reduction from 150% to 100% in the first year, which will then decrease gradually to 50% over 10 years. For wines costing \$15 or more, the initial duty cut is from 150% to 75%, eventually reducing to 25% after 10 years.

Gold, which accounts for 80% of the merchandise imports from EFTA



Fresh start: Union Minister Piyush Goyal during the signing of the India-EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement, in New Delhi, on March 10. PTI

countries, as well as dairy, soya, coal and some sensitive agricultural products have been excluded from India's tariff concession list.

With regard to India's exports to EFTA, there will be no material impact since most products face very low or zero tariff for nations which have the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status in EFTA countries. For example, value wise, 98% of India's \$1.3 billion merchandise exports to Switzerland are industrial products where tariff is already zero. The remaining 2% of India's exports are agricultural products, where gains would be negligible due to low trade values.

Trade in services: on services, both India and the EFTA members have committed to liberalisation across a wide range of sectors. Some key benefits for India include commitments by Norway for access to yoga instructors and practitioners of traditional medicine from India, subject to compliance with its legal framework. Both Norway and Switzerland have committed four and three years respectively for highly skilled Indian professionals moving as intra-corporate transferees, subject to obtaining work permits.

The nitty-gritties of actual service delivery are often impacted by regulatory requirements in each country. A separate annex in the TEPA lays the framework for easing the recognition of qualifications of service suppliers through streamlining the various requirements, including the possibility of achieving equivalence by topping up academic or training requirements, rather than having to repeat the entire professional degree. Separate annexes on financial services and telecom services similarly lay down disciplines that aim to enable ease of

providing such services.

In a departure from previous FTAs of India, benefits of the trade in services chapter would extend to any juridical person (i.e., corporate entity) by merely being incorporated in an EFTA member, while having its actual operations in any other WTO member, including those with which India does not have FTAs. This will allow free riders benefiting from the TEPA. The investment chapter stems that risk by requiring benefits to be confined only to entities having substantial business activities within the EFTA; however, services related to commercial presence will be governed by the services chapter.

Sustainable development: the TEPA's chapter on Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD), comprising commitments on environment and labour aspects, represents a first for India in any FTA. India has so far been sceptical of linking environmental and labour related issues within a FTA, given the concern that these may simply become proxies for protectionist measures. The TSD chapter refers to a range of multilateral environmental agreements and labour conventions, whose implementation is based on a balance of rights and obligations. For example, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and Paris Agreement recognises differential obligations for developed and developing countries. Labour conventions under the International Labour Organization (ILO) are based on a tripartite framework involving the government, as well as organisations representing employers and employees. Even though the TSD chapter is not subject to dispute resolution, India will need to be careful that any scrutiny of its

implementation of environment and labour obligations, which is inevitable under the TSD chapter, is respectful of the balance inherent in multilateral environment and labour conventions.

Intellectual property rights: the EFTA countries are home to several pharmaceutical and high technology MNCs, whose ask has been commitments on protection of intellectual property rights that exceed the WTO's Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement. The TEPA represents a nod to some of these. For example, India's Patents Act provides for pre-grant opposition of a patent application. The TEPA's IPR Annex requires swift rejection of "prima facie unfounded" oppositions. This potentially opens up India's internal regulatory process to external scrutiny on whether this standard was met. Similarly, a statutory requirement under Indian law is filing of an annual statement on working of a patent. The TEPA mandates that this periodicity be increased to three years, with annual statements to be required only in specified cases, which potentially raises the concern that the statutory requirement as it exists under Indian law, may need reconsideration to make it case specific. While amendments to India's patent rules have been notified on March 15, five days after the signing of the TEPA, FTA commitments should ideally have followed such amendments.

Overall, in a nutshell, the TEPA ventures into some uncharted territory. Its implementation over time will determine its impact.

R.V. Anuradha is Partner, Clarus Law Associates; Ajay Srivastava is Founder, Global Trade Research Initiative. Views are personal.

THE GIST

The India-EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) is the latest in India's recent Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). As its name suggests, the thrust of the FTA is deeper economic engagement with the EFTA (European Free Trade Association) countries – Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

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Gold, which accounts for 80% of the merchandise imports from EFTA countries, as well as dairy, soya, coal and some sensitive agricultural products have been excluded from India's tariff concession list.



The hindu analysis by saurabh pandey sir



Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA)

- **India-European Free Trade Association signed a Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) i.e. on 10th March 2024.**
- **India has been working on a Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) with EFTA countries comprising Switzerland, Iceland, Norway & Liechtenstein.**

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- For the first time, India is signing FTA with four developed nations - an important economic bloc in Europe. For the first time in history of FTAs, binding commitment of \$100 bn investment and 1 million direct jobs in the next 15 years has been given.
- The agreement will give a boost to Make in India and provide opportunities to young & talented workforce.
- The agreement comprises of 14 chapters with main focus on market access related to goods, rules of origin, trade facilitation, trade remedies, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, technical barriers to trade, investment promotion, market access on services, intellectual property rights, trade and sustainable development and other legal and horizontal provisions.

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- EFTA is an important regional group, with several growing opportunities for enhancing international trade in goods and services.
- EFTA is one important economic block out of the three (other two - EU & UK) in Europe.
- Among EFTA countries, Switzerland is the largest trading partner of India followed by Norway.

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- The highlights of the agreement are:
- EFTA has committed to promote investments with the aim to increase the stock of foreign direct investments by USD 100 billion in India in the next 15 years, and to facilitate the generation of 1 million direct employment in India, through such investments. The investments do not cover foreign portfolio investment.
- For the first ever time in the history of FTAs, a legal commitment is being made about promoting target-oriented investment and creation of jobs.
- EFTA is offering 92.2% of its tariff lines which covers 99.6% of India's exports. The EFTA's market access offer covers 100% of non-agri products and tariff concession on Processed Agricultural Products (PAP).
- Sectors such as dairy, soya, coal and sensitive agricultural products are kept in exclusion list.

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- India has offered 105 sub-sectors to the EFTA and secured commitments in 128 sub-sectors from Switzerland, 114 from Norway, 107 from Liechtenstein, and 110 from Iceland.
- TEPA would stimulate our services exports in sectors of our key strength / interest such as IT services, business services, personal, cultural, sporting and recreational services, other education services, audio-visual services etc.
- Services offers from EFTA include better access through digital delivery of Services (Mode 1), commercial presence (Mode 3) and improved commitments and certainty for entry and temporary stay of key personnel (Mode 4).
- TEPA has provisions for Mutual Recognition Agreements in Professional Services like nursing, chartered accountants, architects etc.
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- **Commitments related to Intellectual Property Rights in TEPA are at TRIPS level. The IPR chapter with Switzerland, which has high standard for IPR, shows our robust IPR regime.**
- **India's interests in generic medicines and concerns related to evergreening of patents have been fully addressed.**
- **India signals its commitment to Sustainable development, inclusive growth, social development and environmental protection**
- **Fosters transparency, efficiency, simplification, harmonization and consistency of trade procedures**

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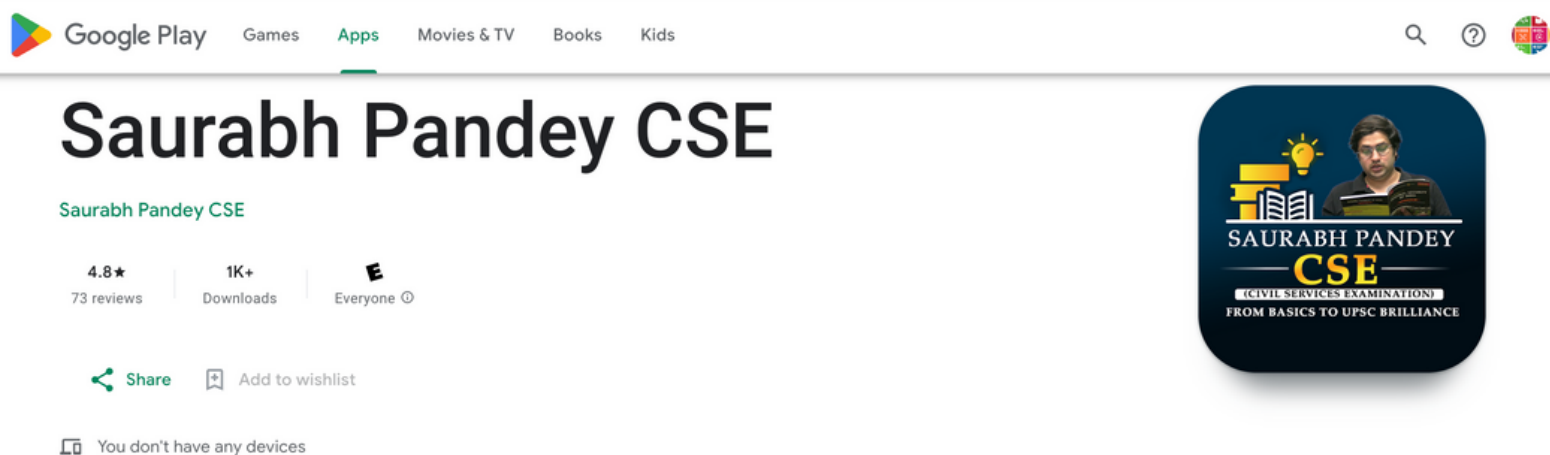
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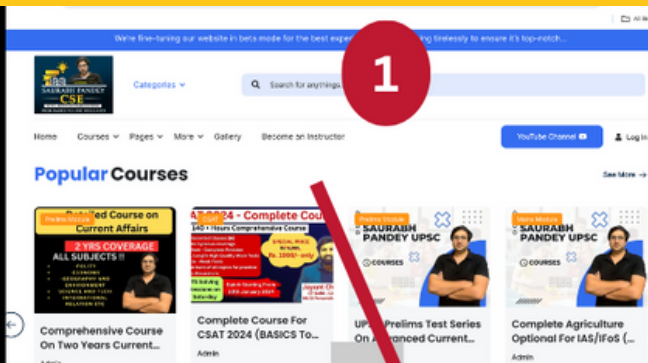
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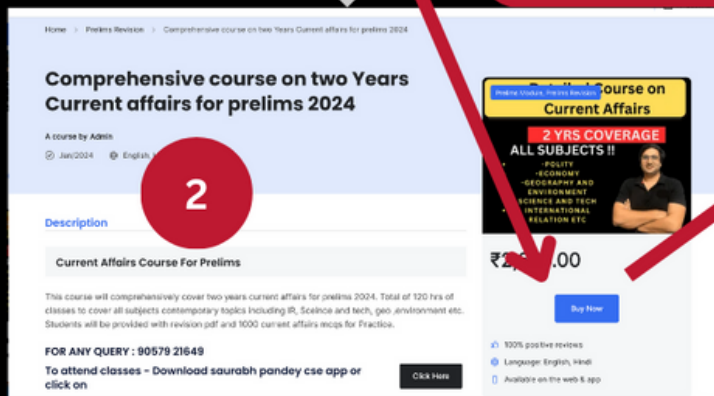
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