

Anthropocene

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Context:

An expert commission rejected a proposal to mark the start of the Anthropocene at a particular date.

Background:

1. The SQS-AWG is a commission responsible for recognising time units within our most recent period of geologic time.
2. Its members have been looking into the question of formalising the Anthropocene Epoch as the youngest epoch, superposing the Holocene. On March 4, 2024, the commission, which consists of topical experts, rejected the proposal with a majority voting against it.

About Anthropocene:

1. Earth's history is divided into a hierarchical series of smaller chunks of time, referred to as the geologic time scale. These divisions, in descending length of time, are called eons, eras, periods, epochs, and ages.
2. These units are classified based on Earth's rock layers, or strata, and the fossils found within them. From examining these fossils, scientists know that certain organisms are characteristic of certain parts of the geologic record. The study of this correlation is called stratigraphy.
3. Officially, the current epoch is called the Holocene, which began 11,700 years ago after the last major ice age.
4. However, the Anthropocene Epoch is an unofficial unit of geologic time, used to describe the most recent period in Earth's history when human activity started to have a significant impact on the planet's climate and ecosystems.
5. The word Anthropocene is derived from the Greek words anthropo, for "man," and cene for "new," coined and made popular by biologist Eugene Storer and chemist Paul Crutzen
6. Scientists still debate whether the Anthropocene is different from the Holocene, and the term has not been formally adopted.
7. The primary question that scientists need to answer before declaring the Anthropocene an epoch is if humans have changed the Earth system to the point that it is reflected in the rock strata.