DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 10-02-2026

Mapping Perspective

1. **Sharda River**

Prelims Perspective

2. **Eurasian otter**
3. **Graphics Processing Units**

Mains Perspective

4. **India-Malaysia relations**
5. **Why did Claude's plugins spook markets?**

Sharda River

Syllabus: GS-1: Indian Geography – Rivers.

Context:

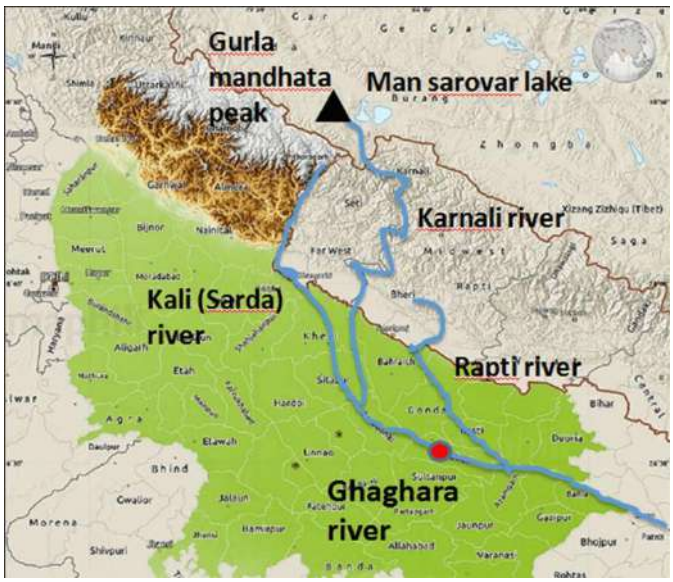
- The **Chief Minister of Uttarakhand** laid the foundation stone of the **Sharda River Corridor** at **Tanakpur**, located in **Champawat district**.
- The project aims at:
  - Riverfront development
  - Tourism promotion
  - Cultural and ecological rejuvenation
  - Flood management and urban renewal

About Sharda River

- **Transboundary river** of **northern India and western Nepal**.
- Known by different names along its course.

Source & Upper Course

- Rises as the **Kali River**.
- Originates in **far northern Uttarakhand** in the **Great Himalayas**.
- Emerges from the eastern slopes of the **Nanda Devi** massif.



International Boundary Role

- Flows **south–southwest**.
- Forms a **natural boundary between Uttarakhand (India) and Nepal** for a significant stretch.

Middle Course

- Descends into the **Indo-Gangetic Plain** at **Barmdeo Mandi (Nepal)**.
- Widens upstream of the **Sharda Barrage**.
- **Below the barrage**, the river is officially called the **Sharda River**.

Lower Course

- Enters **Uttar Pradesh**.
- Flows southeastward.
- Joins the **Ghaghara River**, which is a major tributary of the **Ganges**, southwest of **Bahraich**.
- **Total length**: **~ 480 km (300 miles)**.

Major Tributaries

- Dhauliganga
- Goriganga
- Sarju

Sharda Barrage & Irrigation Significance

- **Sharda Barrage** located near **Banbasa (Uttarakhand)**.
- Source of the **Sharda Canal**:
  - Completed in **1930**
  - Among the **longest irrigation canals** in northern India
- Crucial for:
  - Irrigation in Uttar Pradesh
  - Agricultural productivity
  - Flood moderation

Eurasian otter

Syllabus: GS-3: Environment – Biodiversity – Species in News.

Context:

- **Eurasian otter (*Lutralutra*)**, earlier believed to have disappeared from **Jammu & Kashmir**, has been **recently recorded in the Sindh River, Ganderbal district**.
- Indicates **improving freshwater ecosystem health** and highlights the importance of riverine conservation in the Himalayas.

About Eurasian Otter

- **Also known as**: European otter / Common otter / Old-World otter
- **Type**: Semi-aquatic, carnivorous mammal
- **Family**: Mustelidae

Distribution

- **Global**:
  - Europe, Middle East, Northern Africa
  - Across Russia to China and other parts of Asia
- **India**:
  - **Northern India**, **North-East India**, and **Southern India**

Habitat

- Occupies a **wide range of freshwater and coastal ecosystems**:
  - Rivers, streams, lakes
  - Marshes, swamp forests
  - Coastal areas
- **Indian subcontinent**:
  - Cold hill regions and **mountain streams**

Features & Adaptations

- **Behaviour**:
  - Elusive and **solitary** in nature

- **Aquatic adaptations**:
  - Webbed feet for swimming
  - Ability to **close ears and nostrils underwater**
  - Dense, short fur trapping air for **thermal insulation**
- **Senses**:
  - Highly developed **sight, smell, and hearing**

Ecological Importance

- Acts as a **bio-indicator species** for freshwater ecosystems
- Presence suggests:
  - Low pollution levels
  - Healthy fish populations
  - Intact riparian habitats

Threats

- **Water pollution** (industrial effluents, pesticides)
- **Habitat degradation** and river modification
- **Illegal hunting** for fur

Conservation Status

- **IUCN Red List**: Near Threatened
- **CITES**: Appendix I
- **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 (India)**: Schedule II

Significance of Recent Sighting

- Reflects success of **river rejuvenation and wetland conservation efforts**
- Reinforces the need for:
  - Catchment-level river management
  - Biodiversity-centric development in Himalayan regions
- Important for **Prelims (environment & biodiversity)** and **Mains (GS-III)**

Graphics Processing Units

Syllabus: GS-3: Science and Technology –Computer Technology.

Context:

- **India–USA technology cooperation** to significantly increase trade in technology products, including Graphics Processing Units (GPUs) and other **data-centre–related hardware**.
- Reflects growing importance of **AI, high-performance computing (HPC), cloud infrastructure**, and **strategic tech supply chains**.

What is a GPU?

- A **Graphics Processing Unit (GPU)** is a **specialized electronic circuit** designed to **rapidly perform large numbers of mathematical calculations**.

- Like a **CPU**, it is a **chip component** in computing devices, but optimized for **parallel processing**.
- **Originally developed** to accelerate **3-D graphics rendering** for video games and visual applications.

GPU vs CPU (Conceptual Difference)

Aspect	**CPU**	**GPU**
Core design	Few powerful cores	Thousands of smaller cores
Processing style	Serial (sequential)	Parallel (simultaneous)
Best suited for	General-purpose tasks, control logic	Data-intensive, repetitive calculations
Role	Controls overall system	Accelerates specific workloads

Types of GPUs

- **Discrete (Standalone) GPUs**
  - Separate chips on **add-on cards**
  - Used in **desktops, workstations, servers**
  - High performance; higher power consumption
- **Integrated GPUs**
  - **Combined with CPU** in the same chip package
  - Common in **laptops, smartphones, gaming consoles (e.g., PlayStation 5)**
  - Energy-efficient but relatively lower performance

In both cases, **CPU controls GPU operations**.

Working of a GPU

- Uses **parallel processing**:
  - Thousands of cores execute **multiple instructions simultaneously**.
- Equipped with **dedicated high-bandwidth memory (VRAM)**:
  - Stores large volumes of data for fast access.

- Essential for **graphics-heavy and compute-intensive tasks**.

- Ideal for workloads where **same operation is repeated on large datasets**.

Applications of GPUs

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI) & Machine Learning**
  - Training deep neural networks
- **High-Performance Computing (HPC)**
  - Scientific simulations, genomics
- Data Centers & Cloud Computing
- Weather Forecasting & Climate Modeling
- Cryptocurrency Mining
- Gaming, Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR)

Significance for India

- Critical for:
  - AI Mission & Digital Public Infrastructure
  - Semiconductor ecosystem development
  - Strategic autonomy in advanced computing
- Trade with the US enhances access to **cutting-edge chips** amid global export controls.

India-Malaysia relations

Syllabus: GS-2: International Relation – Bilateral Relations.

Context:

- The Prime Minister of India paid an official visit to **Malaysia**, reaffirming and operationalising the **India–Malaysia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP)**.
- The visit resulted in **wide-ranging agreements** across trade, digital economy, defence, energy, education, healthcare, and regional cooperation.

- It reflects India's intent to **deepen engagement with ASEAN** amid evolving Indo-Pacific and global power dynamics.

Key Outcomes of the Prime Minister's Visit

Digital Economy & Fintech

- Formalisation of the **Malaysia–India Digital Council (MIDC)**:
  - Focus areas: **Fintech, AI, cybersecurity, e-governance, Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)**.
- **NPCI International Limited (NIPL) – PayNet** partnership:
  - Enables **low-cost cross-border digital payments**.
  - Enhances ease of business and people-to-people ties.

Trade & Financial Cooperation

- Agreement to advance **local-currency trade settlement (INR–MYR)**.
- Institutional cooperation between:
  - **Reserve Bank of India**
  - **Bank Negara Malaysia**
- Objective: reduce dependence on the **US Dollar** and transaction costs.

Energy & Semiconductor Cooperation

- Expanded collaboration in:
  - Renewable energy
  - Green hydrogen
- Semiconductor value-chain cooperation:
  - Emphasis on **R&D, skill development, and supply-chain resilience**.

Public Administration & Governance

- MoU on **Combating and Preventing Corruption**:
  - Between **Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)** and **Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC)**.

Disaster Management

- MoU between **National Disaster Management Authorities** of both countries:

- Cooperation in **preparedness, response, and capacity building**.

UN Peacekeeping

- Renewal of cooperation in **United Nations Peacekeeping Operations**.

Education & Skill Development

- Expansion of exchanges under:
  - Malaysia Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP)
  - Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC).
- India invited Malaysian students to the **Study in India Programme**.
- Strengthening **TVET (Technical and Vocational Education & Training)** collaboration:
  - Aligning workforce skills with future economic needs.

Healthcare & Traditional Medicine

- Reaffirmed cooperation in healthcare and **traditional medicine**.
- Deployment of **Traditional Indian Medicine experts** under ITEC.
- MoU between:
  - **Central Council for Research in Homeopathy (India)** and **University of Cyberjaya (Malaysia)** for research and training.

Social Security

- MoU between:
  - Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC), India
  - Social Security Organisation (SOCSO), Malaysia
- Extends **social security coverage** to Indian workers in Malaysia.

Cultural & People-to-People Connect

- Operationalisation of **Thiruvalluvar Chair and Centre** at **Universiti Malaya**:
  - Promotion of **Tamil studies**.
- Launch of **Thiruvalluvar Scholarships** for Malaysian nationals.
- Recognition of the popularity of **Tamil cinema**, referencing the legacy of **M. G. Ramachandran (MGR)**.

Diplomatic Expansion

- India announced the opening of a **new Consulate General in Malaysia**:
  - Improved consular access and trade facilitation.

Global & Regional Cooperation

- Malaysia acceded to the **International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)** (India-led initiative).
- Malaysia welcomed India's **2026 BRICS Chairmanship**.
- India supported:
  - Malaysia's role as a **BRICS Partner Country**
  - Its **membership aspirations**.
- Reaffirmation of **ASEAN unity and centrality**, with appreciation of Malaysia's **ASEAN Chairmanship (2025)**.
- Commitment to a **free, open, and rules-based Indo-Pacific**:
  - Synergy between **ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP)** and **India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI)**.

Defence & Counter-Terrorism

- Reaffirmed **zero tolerance for terrorism**, including cross-border terrorism.
- Welcomed **India–Malaysia co-chairmanship** of:
  - **ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM)-Plus Expert Working Group (EWG)** for **2024–2027**.

India–Malaysia Bilateral Relations: An Overview

Historical Ties

- Links date back over **1,000 years** to the **Chola period (9th–13th centuries)**.
- Under **Rajaraja Chola I** and **Rajendra Chola I**, Chola naval expeditions reached **Southeast Asia**, including present-day Malaysia.
- Foundation of sustained **India–Southeast Asia civilisational interaction**.

Economic Partnership

- Malaysia is **India's 3rd largest trading partner in ASEAN**.
- **Bilateral trade (2024–25): ~USD 19.86 billion**.
- Trade frameworks:
    - Malaysia–India Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (MICECA)
        - ASEAN–India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA).
- Push for **INR–Ringgit** trade settlement.

Defence & Security

- Joint exercises:
    - Harimau Shakti (Army)
    - Samudra Lakshmana (Navy)
    - Udara Shakti (Air Force)
- **Malaysia–India Security Dialogue** as an institutional platform.
- Malaysia as a potential market for Indian defence exports:
    - **Tejas LCA**, **BrahMos missiles**.

Strategic Convergence

- Malaysia is a pillar of India's **Act East Policy**.
- Key partner in shaping **ASEAN–India relations**.

- Cooperation vital for maintaining a **Rules-Based Order in the South China Sea**.

Indian Diaspora

- Malaysia hosts the **world's second-largest PIO community** (~2.7 million).
- Predominantly of **Tamil origin**, mainly from Tamil Nadu.

Major Challenges in India–Malaysia Relations

Persistent Trade Deficit

- Trade heavily skewed in **Malaysia's favour**.
- Indian imports: **Palm oil, electronics, crude oil**.
- Indian exports lag behind in value growth.

Palm Oil Diplomacy

- Malaysia is a top palm oil supplier to India.
- Past political frictions (2019–20) led to **import restrictions**.
- Global scrutiny over **sustainability and deforestation** may raise costs.

Political & Diplomatic Sensitivities

- Past Malaysian comments on:
  - **Article 370**
  - **Citizenship Amendment Act**
- 2019 UNGA remarks accusing India over **Kashmir** strained ties.

China Factor

- China is Malaysia's **largest trading partner** and major investor (BRI projects like **East Coast Rail Link**).
- Divergence in approach to **South China Sea**:
  - Malaysia: quiet diplomacy
  - India: assertive, rules-based stance (along with Quad).

Way Forward: Enhancing India–Malaysia Relations

- **Defence as a Strategic Pillar**:
  - Deepen military cooperation; position India as a reliable defence exporter.

- **Cultural Soft Power**:
  - Leverage Tamil heritage, Thiruvalluvar Centre, and diaspora ties.
- **Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA)**:
  - Integrate Malaysia with India's **IFC-IOR** for Strait of Malacca security.
- **Accelerate AITIGA Review**:
  - Address inverted duty structures by **2026–27**.
- **Long-Term Palm Oil Contracts**:
  - G2G agreements to ensure price stability and supply security.

Conclusion

- India–Malaysia relations are transitioning **from transactional (oil trade)** to **strategic (chips, defence, digital public goods)**.
- Deeper cooperation will enhance **strategic autonomy** for both countries in an increasingly volatile **Indo-Pacific century**.

Practice Qs:

Q. "The recent Prime Ministerial visit to Malaysia marks a shift in India–Malaysia relations from a transactional economic partnership to a comprehensive strategic engagement."Discuss the **key outcomes of the visit** and examine the **opportunities and challenges** in deepening India–Malaysia relations in the context of the **Indo-Pacific and ASEAN centrality**. (250 words)

Why did Claude's plugins spook markets?

Syllabus: GS-3: Indian Economy – IT industry.

Context:

- **Anthropic** released **11 open-source plugins** for **Claude Cowork**, its AI workplace tool.
- **Claude Cowork** functions as a **digital colleague**, not a chatbot:
  - Reads files, drafts documents

- Reviews contracts
- Executes workflows across **legal, finance, sales, marketing**

- Soon after, Anthropic launched **Claude Opus 4.6**:
  - Capable of **coordinating multiple AI agents**
  - Performs **complex tasks** like financial research & due diligence
- Marks a transition from **AI-assisted work → AI-operated work**.

What is SaaS? (Static Concept)

- **Software as a Service (SaaS)**:
  - Cloud-based software delivery model
  - Accessed via internet (browser-based)
  - Subscription-based pricing (per user / per seat)
- Advantages:
  - No local installation
  - Automatic updates
  - Scalability & flexibility

'SaaSpocalypse': Meaning & Market Reaction

- **SaaSpocalypse** = fear that **AI agents may replace software itself**, not just enhance it.
- Key concern:
  - If AI agents autonomously deliver outcomes, **why pay per-user SaaS licences?**
- Market impact:
  - Sharp sell-off in **global software stocks**
  - US SaaS majors &**Indian IT firms** saw steep declines
- Indicates **structural shift in software value creation & pricing**, not just cyclical panic.

From Tools to Autonomous AI Agents

- Earlier phase:

- **AI-assisted systems** within controlled environments
- Example: **BloombergGPT** (March 2023)
  - Trained on proprietary financial data
  - Outperformed general AI on finance-specific tasks

- Current phase:
  - **Autonomous agents** operating across enterprises
  - Minimal human supervision
  - End-to-end workflow execution

Sector-wise Disruption

a) Legal Services – Automation Shock

- Claude plugins automate:
  - Contract review
  - NDA screening
  - Compliance tracking
- Market response:
  - Sharp fall in **Thomson Reuters**
  - Losses for **LegalZoom**, **RELX**, **Wolters Kluwer**

b) Financial Services – AI in the Back Office

- **Goldman Sachs** partnered with Anthropic
- AI agents now handle:
    - Trade accounting
    - Compliance
    - Client onboarding
- Triggered selloffs in:
    - **FactSet**
    - **S&P Global**
    - **Moody's**

c) Healthcare – Agentic AI at Scale

- **Cognizant** + **Palantir**
- Embedded AI agents into **TriZetto**
- Handles:
    - Claims routing & adjudication
    - Supply chain workflows
- Humans intervene only in **exceptions**

Workforce Implications (Global)

- Anthropic CEO warning:
    - **Up to 50% of entry-level white-collar jobs** at risk in 5 years
- **Salesforce** CEO:
    - No further hiring of engineers or lawyers due to AI efficiency
- Coding as leading indicator:
    - Majority of code now AI-generated
    - AI may author **~20% of public GitHub commits** by year-end

India Inc & IT Sector: Challenges

- Indian IT response so far:
    - Incremental, cautious AI investments

- Structural risk:
  - Autonomous AI automates **high-volume, repetitive tasks**
  - These tasks underpin India's **outsourcing-led model**
- Traditional argument of **slow enterprise adoption** losing relevance as:
  - Banks, defence agencies embed AI directly into operations

Jobs at Risk, Roles Rewritten (India)

Immediate Impact

- Headcount cuts
- Fresher hiring freeze
- Automation of:
  - Testing
  - Maintenance
  - Compliance roles

Emerging Opportunities

- **Human-in-the-Loop (HITL)** roles in regulated sectors:
  - Validation of AI decisions
  - Exception handling
  - Governance, ethics, compliance
- Demand shifts from routine coding → **domain expertise & judgment**

Way Forward for Indian IT

- Shift from **labour-based delivery → AI deployment partnerships**
- Leverage strengths:
  - Deep domain expertise in banking, insurance, healthcare
- Three growth avenues:

Enterprise AI deployment partnerships

HITL operations centres for regulated industries

Large-scale reskilling for AI design, supervision & governance