International Relations · GS - II

Examine how cross-border railway connectivity, with reference to the Ayodhya–Janakpur Saryu-Kamala Express, can strengthen India's neighbourhood diplomacy and promote regional integration.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
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MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Religious and cultural links, cross-border mobility, trade and tourism, people-to-people contacts, infrastructure coordination, border management, operational challenges

Model Answer

Introduction

The proposed Saryu-Kamala Express connecting Ayodhya in India with Janakpur in Nepal represents an important step towards strengthening cross-border connectivity. By linking two significant religious and cultural centres, it can complement India's broader neighbourhood-first policy.

Significance of Cross-Border Railway Connectivity

1. **Cultural diplomacy:** Connectivity between Ayodhya and Janakpur reinforces shared Ramayana heritage and strengthens civilisational ties between the two countries.

2. **People-to-people relations:** Direct railway services can facilitate pilgrimage, family visits, educational exchanges and cultural interactions.

3. **Economic integration:** Improved transport connectivity can encourage tourism, local businesses, trade and employment generation along the railway corridor.

4. **Regional cooperation:** Railway connectivity through locations such as Gorakhpur, Raxaul, Sitamarhi and Jaynagar can strengthen transport networks and improve access to regional economic centres.

5. **Strategic significance:** Reliable connectivity strengthens mutual interdependence and reinforces India's role as a development and connectivity partner in its neighbourhood.

Challenges and the Way Forward

1. **Infrastructure coordination:** Both countries must ensure compatible railway infrastructure, efficient border facilities and coordinated operational procedures.

2. **Security and customs:** Passenger verification, baggage screening and customs arrangements must facilitate smooth movement without compromising security.

3. **Operational sustainability:** Affordable fares, reliable scheduling and adequate passenger demand are essential for long-term viability.

4. **Integrated planning:** Railway services should be complemented by road connectivity, tourism infrastructure and local economic development.

Conclusion

The Saryu-Kamala Express can transform shared cultural heritage into practical regional cooperation. Its success will depend on reliable operations, institutional coordination and sustained commitment to India-Nepal connectivity.

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