International Relations · GS - II

Cross-border infrastructure projects between India and Nepal are not merely instruments of economic connectivity but also important tools of cultural diplomacy and regional integration. Discuss in the context of the Ayodhya–Janakpur Saryu-Kamala Express.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
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MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Cross-border rail connectivity promotes religious tourism, bilateral trade, cultural diplomacy and regional integration. However, infrastructure coordination, border management, operational efficiency and equitable regional development remain essential challenges.

Model Answer

The Saryu-Kamala Express, connecting Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh with Janakpur Dham in Nepal, represents an important development in India's neighbourhood connectivity and cultural diplomacy. Inaugurated on November 23, 2026, it strengthens the civilisational relationship between the two countries.

Major Significance:

1. **Cultural diplomacy:** Connects Ayodhya, associated with Lord Ram, and Janakpur, revered as the birthplace of Goddess Sita, strengthening shared Ramayana heritage.
2. **Religious tourism:** Facilitates cross-border pilgrimage and promotes the Ramayana tourism circuit.
3. **Economic integration:** Benefits local traders, hospitality businesses and tourism-dependent communities.
4. **People-to-people relations:** Improves mobility for education, business and family interactions.

5. **Regional connectivity:** Strengthens India's Neighbourhood First Policy and cross-border infrastructure cooperation.

Challenges: Border coordination, customs procedures, operational efficiency and infrastructure maintenance require sustained cooperation.

Way Forward: Expand multimodal connectivity, simplify passenger movement and develop integrated tourism circuits.

Conclusion: The railway demonstrates how infrastructure can transform shared cultural heritage into an instrument of regional cooperation and mutual prosperity.

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