International Relations · GS - II

Examine the significance of religious pilgrimage corridors in promoting people-to-people relations between India and its neighbouring countries.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
DAILY PRACTICE 24/11/2026	GS - II	International Relations

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Religious diplomacy, people-to-people contacts, soft power, cross-border cooperation, security concerns, bilateral trust

Model Answer

Introduction

Religious pilgrimage corridors provide regulated access to sacred sites across international borders. The Kartarpur Sahib Corridor, operationalised in 2019, is an example of how religious heritage can facilitate people-to-people engagement between India and Pakistan.

Significance of Religious Pilgrimage Corridors

1. **Cultural and Religious Connectivity:** They enable devotees to access important religious sites and preserve shared cultural and spiritual heritage.

2. **People-to-People Relations:** Direct interaction among pilgrims and local communities can reduce social distance, encourage mutual understanding and strengthen grassroots connections.

3. **Religious Diplomacy and Soft Power:** Facilitating access to sacred sites demonstrates respect for religious sentiments and can generate goodwill beyond formal diplomatic engagements.

4. **Regional Cooperation:** Such arrangements require coordination on border infrastructure, documentation, security and movement management, creating opportunities for practical cooperation.

Challenges

1. **Security Concerns:** Cross-border movement requires effective screening, surveillance and coordination to prevent misuse.

2. **Political Tensions:** Bilateral disputes and deterioration in diplomatic relations can disrupt pilgrimage arrangements.

3. **Administrative Restrictions:** Documentation requirements, limited access and sudden suspensions can affect pilgrims' ability to undertake religious visits.

Way Forward

1. Establish predictable operational protocols and transparent procedures for pilgrims.
2. Strengthen communication between relevant border and administrative authorities.
3. Use diplomatic channels to ensure that temporary security concerns are addressed through proportionate and coordinated measures.
4. Explore similar arrangements for other shared religious and cultural heritage sites.

Conclusion

Religious corridors cannot independently resolve political disputes, but they can sustain humanitarian and cultural engagement during periods of strained relations. Their continuity depends on balancing religious access, bilateral cooperation and legitimate security requirements.