International Relations · GS - II

Analyse how India can balance religious and cultural connectivity with national security concerns in managing cross-border pilgrimage routes.

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

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Religious diplomacy, Kartarpur Corridor, people-to-people contact, border management, intelligence coordination, misinformation, bilateral cooperation

Model Answer

Introduction

Cross-border pilgrimage routes provide opportunities for cultural exchange, religious freedom and regional confidence-building. However, strained bilateral relations and security vulnerabilities require careful institutional management.

Opportunities of Religious Connectivity

1. **People-to-people diplomacy:** Pilgrimage promotes cultural understanding and preserves shared historical and religious heritage.
2. **Regional engagement:** Religious exchanges can create channels of communication even during periods of political tension.
3. **Soft power:** Facilitating access to important religious sites strengthens India's commitment to pluralism and religious freedom.

Emerging Security Concerns

1. **Misuse of religious networks:** Hostile actors may attempt to exploit pilgrimage-related contacts for propaganda, radicalisation or unlawful activities. Specific allegations require credible investigation.
2. **Cross-border threats:** Infiltration, smuggling and other security risks necessitate effective border surveillance.
3. **Information warfare:** Disinformation and inflammatory narratives can create mistrust and communal tensions.
4. **Diplomatic sensitivities:** Political disagreements may affect the functioning of bilateral pilgrimage arrangements.

Way Forward

1. **Risk-based verification:** Maintain transparent pilgrim registration and security screening without discriminatory practices.
2. **Institutional coordination:** Strengthen cooperation among the Ministry of External Affairs, security agencies and border-management institutions.
3. **Diplomatic engagement:** Use bilateral mechanisms to resolve operational disputes and address security concerns.
4. **Information integrity:** Counter misinformation through timely official communication and evidence-based investigation.
5. **Continuity of religious access:** Avoid allowing political disagreements to unnecessarily undermine legitimate religious exchanges.

Conclusion

Religious connectivity and national security need not be competing objectives. A framework based on vigilance, diplomatic engagement and respect for religious freedom can protect both national interests and cultural ties.