

First dedicated freight corridor to be on track from August 15

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After 165 years of its birth, Indian Railways is set to get its first publicly-owned dedicated corridor for freight trains on August 15, when the country will be celebrating its 72nd Independence Day.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to dedicate to the nation a 190-km railway line between Dadri in Uttar Pradesh and Phulera in Rajasthan, which fall under the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (WDFC).

The Red Fort speech of the PM this year is likely to set the pitch for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, citing the government's achievements in the four years.

For the railways, that is facing stiff competition from roadways in freight traffic, this can come as a fresh lease of life as the project is finally taking



shape even though partially after 12 years of its formation. It was in February 2006 that the Cabinet had given in-principle nod to the project.

"The feeder route at Tundla is already in place and the Ateli-Phulera route will be functional on August 15," said a government official. The ₹814-billion project of Eastern and Western DFCs will cover a total of 3,360 km track, of which around 1,500

km falls in the western region starting from Dadri to Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust.

Sources said that the government is likely to highlight this as a major achievement for the elections as it was successful in completing land acquisition and awarding the contracts for the projects. After eight years of its conceptualisation, the Congress government was able to award only 18.45 per cent of

the contracts as of March 2014.

While Japan International Cooperation Agency is providing loan of ₹387.22 billion for the Western India project, the Eastern DFC (Mughalsarai-Allahabad-Kanpur-Khurja-Dadri- & Khurja-Ludhiana) is being funded by the World Bank through a loan of \$2.360 billion.

The availability of this loan was also ensured in the last four years. Early this year, the

STATES COVERED

Western DFC (km)

Total	1,504	Haryana	177
Rajasthan	567	Maharashtra	177
Gujarat	565	Uttar Pradesh	18

Eastern DFC (km)

Total	1,856	Jharkhand	196
UP	1,058	Punjab	88
Bihar	239	Haryana	72
West Bengal	203	Both corridors to be commissioned by April 2020	

railways had conducted a trial run on the Ateli-Phulera section of the Western DFC at a maximum speed of 100 km per hour. It took less than four hours to complete the journey.

According to its current road map, the railways is planning to commission both the lines by April 2020.

"There will be at least 10 feeder lines in the western corridor only connecting the main line to the supply freight. This is going to reduce the traffic by more than half in these busy routes," he said.

According to estimates, delay in the projects has led to a cost overrun of 189 per cent from the earlier lined up ₹281.81 billion in 2008 to ₹814.59 billion. This includes higher land costs.

This includes ₹266.74 billion for EDFC and ₹467.18 billion for WDFC along with a land cost of ₹80.67 billion.

According to CAG estimates, there was a ₹44.42 billion increase in land cost by 2014.