

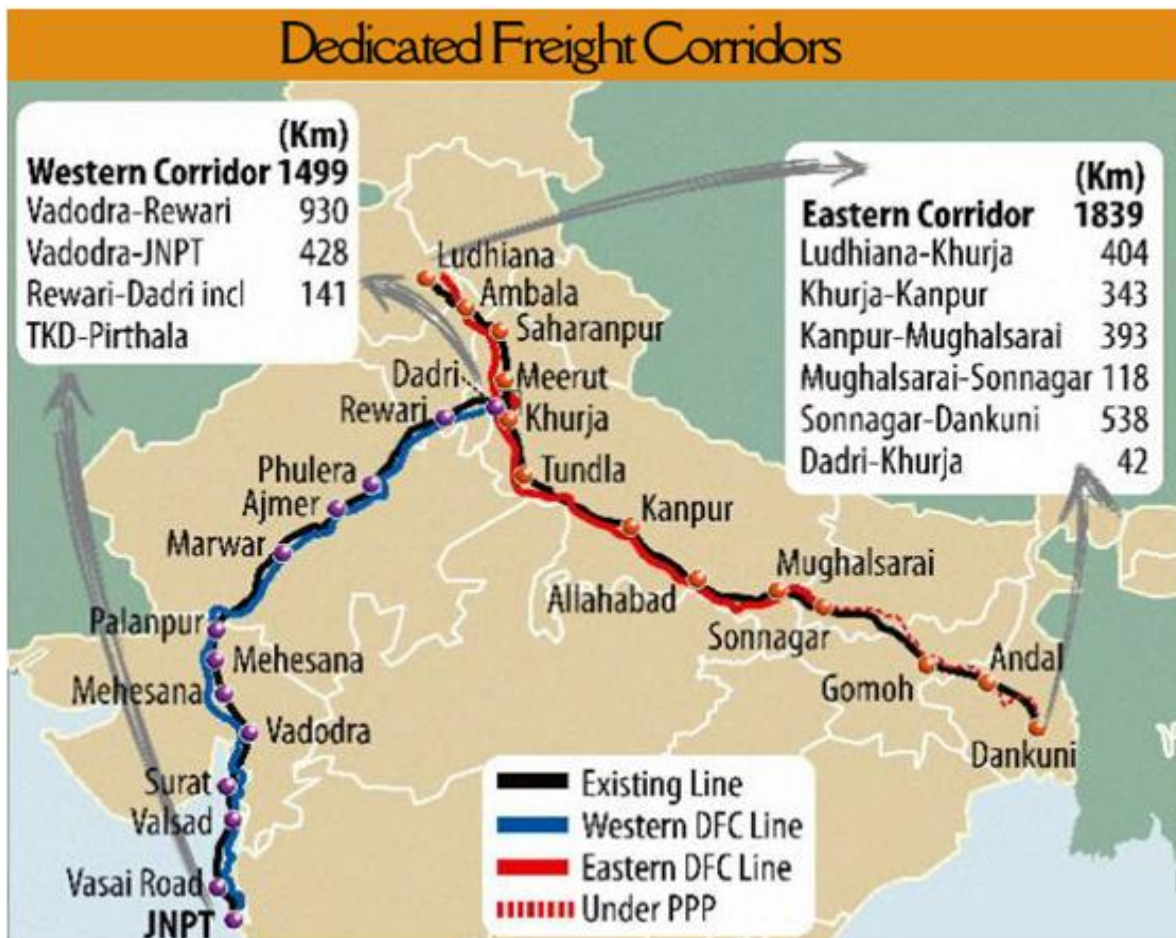


## Current Affairs of the Day

### GS III

- New freight corridor a big boost: PM
- India's fiscal deficit may exceed 7% in current fiscal, say sources
- 1 million migratory birds counted at Odisha's Chilika lake

## New freight corridor a big boost: PM



### Highlights:

1. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday inaugurated the New Rewari-New Madar section of the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor and flagged off the world's first 1.5-km-long electrified double stack long haul container train.
2. The section, which became operational after a hard work of five to six years, would be beneficial to farmers, industrialists and businessmen in the National Capital Region, Haryana and Rajasthan.



3. The corridor would lead to the development of growth centres and points in several cities, creation of job opportunities and conditions attracting more investments. It would give a new fillip to the local industries and manufacturing units by providing them faster and cheaper access to the national and international markets. They would get easy access to the ports in Gujarat and Maharashtra.
4. A portion of the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor, the New Bhaupur-New Khurja section, was started last month and through it, farm produce was being transported from Punjab and coal from Jharkhand was being supplied to the National Capital Region, Haryana and Punjab.
5. Compared to the previous freight train average speed of 25 km/hour, a maximum of 90 km/hour had now been achieved.
6. It would not only benefit villages, farmers, the poor and the small businesses but also attract big manufacturers.

## India's fiscal deficit may exceed 7% in current fiscal, say sources

India's fiscal deficit for the year ending in March is likely to exceed 7% of gross domestic product as revenue collections suffered from a lockdown and restrictions to rein in the spread of COVID-19.

### Highlights:

1. The government had in February projected a deficit of 3.5% for the current year. It estimated government borrowing of ₹7.8 trillion, later revised to ₹12 trillion, to provide relief to millions of people and businesses hurt by the pandemic.
2. The pandemic and stringent lockdown imposed in the early stages hit India hard. Asia's third-largest economy recorded its first-ever recession with a contraction of 23.9% in the April-June quarter and a 7.5% fall in the September quarter.
3. Another senior government source said finances were in poor condition because of the shortfall in tax receipts, but the government has little room to cut spending as the revival of the growth remains the top priority.



## 1 million migratory birds counted at Odisha's Chilika lake

The dismantling of illegal prawn farms inside the lake is being cited as the main reasons behind the avian gathering



### Highlights:

1. A record 1,105,040 migratory birds belonging to 184 species have arrived in Odisha's Chilika lake this year, the annual bird count conducted by the Chilika Wildlife Division on January 5, 2020, showed. Chilika is Asia's largest brackish water lagoon.
2. This year, **five rare Great Knot** (*Calidris tenuirostris*) birds were sighted after five years in Chilika.
3. The Nalabana island or Nalabana Bird Sanctuary inside the lake continued to be the most favoured destination for the birds.
4. Nalabana was declared a bird sanctuary under the Wildlife Protection Act in 1972. The island disappears during the monsoon due to inundation, only to emerge again post-monsoon.
5. Migratory birds usually start arriving at Chilika in November as it is a comparatively hospitable alternate habitat compared to the extreme freezing conditions in their natural habitats in Siberia, China, Japan and other countries in the northern hemisphere.



6. The increase in the number of migratory birds this year is due to the availability of open space, following the eviction of large tracks of illegal prawn gheries by the Chilika Development Authority (CDA).
7. Last year, the Odisha High Court ordered the state government to initiate the demolition of illegal prawn gheries in Chilika in order to restore the ecology of the wetland. Gheries are areas encroached for illegal prawn cultivation inside the wetland area.