May 13, 2025

The Indian Express Private Limited: Ratings reaffirmed

Summary of rating action

Instrument*	Previous rated amount (Rs. crore)	Current rated amount (Rs. crore)	Rating action
Long-term – Fund-based – Working capital facilities	20.0	20.0	[ICRA]A (Stable); reaffirmed
Short-term – Non-fund based – Letter of credit	55.0	55.0	[ICRA]A1; reaffirmed
Long-term/Short-term – Unallocated limits	30.0	30.0	[ICRA]A (Stable)/[ICRA]A1; reaffirmed
Total	**105.0**	**105.0**	

**Instrument details are provided in Annexure I*

Rationale

The reaffirmation of ratings for The Indian Express Private Limited (TIEPL) favourably factors in the healthy brand recognition of its key publications – 'The Indian Express' and 'Loksatta' – in its key operating regions and strong financial risk profile as reflected in healthy margins, robust debt protection metrics and strong liquidity position. TIEPL's revenue and operating margins are expected to remain at similar levels of FY2024 with revenues estimated to be in the range of Rs. 480 - 500 crore in FY2025 and FY2026 (FY2024: Rs. 486 crore). The operating margin is projected to be 16-17% in FY2025 and FY2026. Moderation in newsprint prices over the last 4-6 quarters has supported TIEPL's profitability. The leverage is likely to remain strong, given the marginal debt, resulting in estimated Total Debt/OPBITDA of less than 0.2 times as of March 2025 and March 2026. The company maintains a strong liquidity position, with free cash and investments of around Rs. 465 crore as on March 31, 2025, which is expected to sustain going forward, as there are no major capex or investment plans. The ratings note the demonstrated track record of operations, along with experienced management resulting in a diverse and established advertiser base for its key publications.

The ratings are, however, constrained by the company's modest scale of operations, with revenues expected to remain rangebound within Rs. 480-510 crore from FY2025 to FY2027. Further, the operating margins are exposed to adverse movements in newsprint prices, along with foreign exchange rate fluctuations on account of high dependence on newsprint imports. The company faces geographical concentration risk with presence in limited territories, namely Delhi and Maharashtra, which account for nearly 60% of circulation volumes. The credit profile also remains exposed to the structural challenges faced by the newspaper industry viz. changing consumer preferences, especially in the English print segment, where customer preference (primarily from metros and Tier-I cities) has been shifting towards digital mediums and the inability to pass on the rise in newsprint prices, given the pressure on circulation volumes.

The Stable outlook on TIEPL's long-term rating reflects ICRA's expectations that it will maintain robust debt protection metrics, supported by marginal debt levels and strong liquidity position.

Key rating drivers and their description

Credit strengths

Strong financial risk profile – TIEPL's revenue and operating margin is expected to remain at similar levels of FY2024 with estimated revenues of Rs. 480 - 500 crore in FY2025 and FY2026 (FY2024: Rs. 486 crore), while the operating margin is projected to be in the range of 16-17% in FY2025 and FY2026. Moderation in newsprint prices in the last 4-6 quarters has supported TIEPL's profitability. The leverage metrics are likely to remain strong, given the marginal debt, resulting in estimated

Total Debt/OPBITDA of less than 0.2 times as of March 2025 and March 2026. The company maintains strong liquidity position, with free cash and investments of around Rs. 465 crore as on March 31, 2025, which is expected to sustain going forward, given there are no major capex or investment plans.

Healthy brand recognition with stable readership base of key publications – The ratings factor in the demonstrated track record of operations, along with experienced management resulting in a diverse and established advertiser base for its key publications – 'The Indian Express' and 'Loksatta'.

Credit challenges

Moderate scale of operations with low business diversity and high geographical concentration – The ratings are constrained by the company's modest scale of operations, with revenues expected to remain rangebound within Rs. 480-510 crore from FY2025 to FY2027. TIEPL remains exposed to geographical concentration with presence limited to Delhi and Maharashtra, which account for nearly 60% of circulation volumes.

Operating margins vulnerable to changes in newsprint prices and forex fluctuations – The operating margins are exposed to adverse movements in newsprint prices, along with foreign exchange rate fluctuations on account of high dependence on newsprint imports. The company's credit profile remains exposed to structural challenges faced by the newspaper industry viz. changing consumer preferences, especially in the English print segment, where customer preference (primarily from metros and Tier-I cities) has been shifting towards digital mediums and the inability to pass on the rise in newsprint prices, given the pressure on circulation volumes.

Liquidity position: Strong

TIEPL's liquidity profile remains strong, aided by free cash and bank balances of Rs. 32.68 crore as of March 2025, along with liquid current investments of ~Rs. 22.54 crore and non-current investments of ~Rs. 408.35 crore. Moreover, the liquidity position is supported by the undrawn fund-based working capital limits of Rs. 70 crore as of March 2025. In absence of major capex and dividend plans, along with expectations of healthy profitability, the liquidity position is likely to remain strong over the next 12-18 months.

Rating sensitivities

Positive factors – ICRA could upgrade TIEPL's ratings if it diversifies its business operations, along with improvement in its revenues and profitability, while maintaining comfortable leverage levels and strong liquidity.

Negative factors – Pressure on the company's ratings could arise in case of a decline in scale or profitability, impacting the debt protection metrics and liquidity position. Additionally, significant elongation of working capital cycle or any large debt-funded capex impacting its leverage or liquidity position may lead to a rating downgrade.

Analytical approach

Analytical Approach	Comments
Applicable rating methodologies	Corporate Credit Rating Methodology Rating Methodology- Print Media
Parent/Group support	Not Applicable
Consolidation/Standalone	The ratings are based on the company's standalone financial statements

About the company

The Indian Express Private Limited (TIEPL), incorporated in 2003, is a privately-held print media company with a well-diversified publication profile, comprising dailies such as The Indian Express (English daily), Loksatta (Marathi daily), Jansatta (Hindi daily) and The Financial Express (business daily). The key markets for its publications are Delhi and Maharashtra. Besides, it publishes various magazines such as Express Computer, Food and Hospitality World, Express Travelworld, Express Pharma, etc, which comprise the company's business publication division. It also has an events business division, which organises several events like Ram Nath Goenka Excellence in Journalism Awards, India Press Photo Awards, etc.

Key financial indicators (audited)

TIEPL – Standalone	FY2023	FY2024
Operating income	456.2	486.0
PAT	59.5	83.2
OPBDIT/OI	15.3%	17.5%
PAT/OI	13.0%	17.1%
Total outside liabilities/Tangible net worth (times)	0.2	0.1
Total debt/OPBDIT (times)	0.2	0.0
Interest coverage (times)	125.2	179.5

Source: Company, ICRA Research; All ratios as per ICRA's calculations; Amount in Rs. crore; PAT: Profit after tax; OPBDIT: Operating profit before depreciation, interest, taxes and amortisation

Status of non-cooperation with previous CRA: Not applicable

Any other information: None

Rating history for past three years

	Current (FY2026)			Chronology of rating history for the past 3 years					
	FY2026			FY2025		FY2024		FY2023	
Instrument	Type	Amount rated (Rs. crore)	May 13, 2025	Date	Rating	Date	Rating	Date	Rating
Fund-based – Working capital facilities	Long- term	20.0	[ICRA]A (Stable)	-	-	Feb-27-24	[ICRA]A (Stable)	Jun-24-22	[ICRA]A (Stable); ISSUER NOT COOPERATING
								Nov-11-22	[ICRA]A (Stable)
Non-fund based – Letter of credit	Short- term	55.0	[ICRA]A1	-	-	Feb-27-24	[ICRA]A1	Jun-24-22	[ICRA]A1; ISSUER NOT COOPERATING
								Nov-11-22	[ICRA]A1
Unallocated limits	Long- term and short-term	30.0	[ICRA]A (Stable)/ [ICRA]A1	-	-	Feb-27-24	[ICRA]A (Stable)/ [ICRA]A1	Jun-24-22	-
								Nov-11-22	[ICRA]A (Stable)/ [ICRA]A1
Unallocated limits	Long- term	-		-	-	Feb-27-24	-	Jun-24-22	[ICRA]A (Stable); ISSUER NOT COOPERATING
								Nov-11-22	-

Complexity level of the rated instruments

Instrument	Complexity Indicator
Long-term – Fund-based – Working capital facilities	Simple
Short-term – Non-fund based – Letter of credit	Very Simple
Long-term/Short-term – Unallocated limits	Not Applicable

The Complexity Indicator refers to the ease with which the returns associated with the rated instrument could be estimated. It does not indicate the risk related to the timely payments on the instrument, which is rather indicated by the instrument's credit rating. It also does not indicate the complexity associated with analysing an entity's financial, business, industry risks or complexity related to the structural, transactional or legal aspects. Details on the complexity levels of the instruments are available on ICRA's website: Click here

Annexure I: Instrument details

ISIN	Instrument Name	Date of Issuance	Coupon Rate	Maturity	Amount Rated (Rs. crore)	Current Rating and Outlook
NA	**Cash credit**	April 2022	-	-	20.0	[ICRA]A (Stable)
NA	**Letter of credit**	April 2022	-	-	55.0	[ICRA]A1
NA	**Unallocated**	-	-	-	30.0	[ICRA]A (Stable)/[ICRA]A1

Source: Company

Annexure II: List of entities considered for consolidated analysis- Not Applicable

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ABOUT ICRA LIMITED

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Today, ICRA and its subsidiaries together form the ICRA Group of Companies (Group ICRA). ICRA is a Public Limited Company, with its shares listed on the Bombay Stock Exchange and the National Stock Exchange. The international Credit Rating Agency Moody's Investors Service is ICRA's largest shareholder.

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