

September 18, 2026

Chennai Port Authority: Rating reaffirmed

Summary of rating action

Instrument*	Previous rated amount (Rs. crore)	Current rated amount (Rs. crore)	Rating action	Financial Sector Regulator#
Long term - Fund-based – Term loan	1,775.00	1,775.00	[ICRA]AA- (Stable); reaffirmed	RBI
Total	1,775.00	1,775.00		

*Instrument details are provided in Annexure I

#The Securities and Exchange Board of India's (SEBI) grievance redressal/dispute resolution and SEBI investor protection mechanisms such as SEBI Complaint Redress System (SCORES) and Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) shall not be available for activities and instruments that fall under the regulatory purview of financial sector regulators (FSRs) other than SEBI Rationale

Rationale

For arriving at the rating, ICRA has taken a consolidated view of Chennai Port Authority (ChPA) along with its wholly owned subsidiary Kamarajar Port Limited (KPL), given the financial and operational linkages between the two entities, although KPL operates as a separate limited company.

The rating reaffirmation factors in the strategic importance of ChPA and its subsidiary, KPL, as they are among the 14 major ports in India. It also reflects the sovereign ownership of ChPA, which is under the direct administrative control of the Ministry of Shipping (MoS), Government of India (GoI). The rating also considers the diversified share of cargo, with the ports handling coal, petroleum, oil and lubricants (POL), automobiles, containers and others. Coal remains the major cargo handled at KPL, while POL products are primarily handled at ChPA, apart from the containers handled at both ports. The container terminals at ChPA and KPL are operated by reputed global and domestic port logistics players, with revenue-sharing and minimum guaranteed volume clauses in their contracts. Collectively, the two ports accounted for ~24% of India's container share in FY2026.

The rating also factors in the increasing volumes at ChPA (year-on-year (YoY) growth of ~5.35%), while KPL volumes remained stable with a 1% YoY growth. KPL's volumes are expected to rise further, with general cargo berth-I (GCB-I) bidding, the takeover of Sical Iron Ore terminal and completion of other capital expenditure (capex). Coal Berth III has commenced which would also add volumes. Meanwhile, ChPA's volumes are expected to remain stable over the near-to-medium term until the commencement of traffic via the Port-Maduravoyal flyover. The rating also factors in the vast industrial hinterland catered to by the two ports and the operational synergies between the ports.

The rating also accounts for the tariff flexibility available to both ChPA and KPL after the notification of the Major Ports Authority Act (MPAA), 2021. Previously, ChPA's tariff was regulated by the Tariff Authority for Major Ports (TAMP), which restricted the pricing flexibility (KPL was already outside the purview of TAMP, giving it pricing flexibility).

The rating remains constrained by the impact of the debt undertaken by ChPA to acquire KPL, affecting the capital structure and debt coverage indicators of the consolidated entity. ChPA availed debt of Rs. 1,775-crore in FY2020 to acquire KPL for Rs. 2,380 crore. In view of the limited cash generation from operations, ChPA's debt will be serviced by dividend payments from KPL, although its liquidity profile is supported by a 15-year repayment tenure. ChPA also maintains a 3-month debt service reserve account (DSRA) for debt servicing, and all dividend payments from KPL are routed through an escrow account for the same purpose. This has contributed to a large amount of prepayment, resulting in an outstanding amount of ~Rs. 772 crore as on March 31, 2026.

Further, the high pension obligations and salary expenses at ChPA constrain the profit margins of the consolidated entity. ICRA notes that ChPA's standalone adjusted net worth remained negative until FY2023 due to the large unfunded pension and other

retirement liabilities, weakening the consolidated entity's net worth. In FY2024, the net worth turned positive with the reduction in pensioners and employees. However, the 8.5% wage increase in FY2025 following a trade union strike negatively impacted profits and the net worth position over the near-to-medium term. In FY2025, there was a Rs. 234.67-crore impact on the profit and loss (P&L) account of ChPA owing to wage revision arrears pertaining to the April 01, 2022 to March 31, 2025 period. This, combined with the significant increase in pension liabilities, caused a negative adjusted net worth of the standalone entity, which further weakened in FY2026 with the full effect of the wage revision.

Further, there is high competition and overcapacity in the container segment at the Chennai cluster. However, the risk is partly mitigated by captive customers in certain cargo segments, as well as the minimum guaranteed volume commitments and revenue-sharing agreements with container terminal operators. ICRA also notes the congestion issues at ChPA, though the risk is expected to be mitigated in the medium term by the completion of some connectivity projects currently under implementation. The most significant among these is the double-decker flyover from the Chennai Port to Maduravoyal, which would facilitate the movement of heavy vehicles to and from the port at all times.

ICRA also notes the large number of contingent liabilities in KPL's accounts due to the claims raised by one of the BOT operators. The appellate court's decision was against KPL, and KPL has since appealed to the High Court by KPL. Any adverse developments would remain a key monitorable. Further, ICRA notes that KPL is the concessioning authority for the proposed International Container Transshipment Port project at Galathea Bay, Nicobar Islands, which is expected to entail some outflows from the company towards land acquisition, etc. Further, KPL is getting the necessary approvals for the initial public offering (IPO) process, which is a key monitorable. As on March 31, 2026, 30% of shares of KPL are pledged towards ChPA's term loan exposure taken for acquisition of KPL.

The Stable outlook on the long-term rating reflects ICRA's opinion on the continued stability of operations with improving volumes expected at KPL and ChPA maintaining stable volumes owing to healthy demand in the Chennai cluster. Additionally, the consolidated entity will continue to benefit from the sovereign ownership of the parent entity and its strategic importance to the GoI, the favourable location of the ports, long-term revenue-sharing contracts with reputed global and domestic BOT concessionaries and the high captive cargo of KPL.

Key rating drivers and their description

Credit strengths

Strategic importance and Government linkages – ChPA, together with KPL, is strategically important to the GoI for the country's economic growth, as they are among the 14 major ports in India. The GoI earlier held a 66.7% stake in KPL, and the remaining was held by ChPA. In March 2020, ChPA acquired the GoI's stake in KPL, making it a wholly owned subsidiary. The acquisition provided operational synergies in the form of lower competition and streamlined capacity planning. Further, ChPA is within the direct administrative control of the MoS with board representation from the ministry, the Department of Customs, the Government of Tamil Nadu (GoTN) and the Mercantile Marine Department, reflecting strong government linkages. ChPA has also received moderate financial support in the form of grants from the MoS to partly fund some of the capex programmes undertaken by the authority.

Favourable location of ports with adequate draft and access to large hinterland – Both ChPA and KPL are all-weather ports on the southeast coast of India, in the northeastern part of Tamil Nadu. Positioned along the international shipping route, both ports operate as attractive ports of call. Further, the draft available at the ports is adequate in the range of 13 to 18 metres, enabling them to accommodate bigger vessels with higher economies of scale, driving significant cost advantages for end users. Both ports have access to the vast hinterland of Tamil Nadu and parts of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, handling a variety of cargo comprising containers, coal, liquid and break-bulk cargo.

ChPA had traditionally been a bulk port, handling coal, iron ore, liquid and dry bulk, catering to the requirements of power generators, oil refineries and steel/ aluminium plants. However, after the commissioning of the container terminals in 2001 and 2009, along with the shift of coal and iron ore cargo to KPL in 2012, following the High Court's orders citing pollution and

hazardous risks for citizens living near the port, ChPA has become predominantly a container handling port, while KPL mainly handles coal and other break-bulk cargo.

Diversified cargo handled with strong market position in container segment – The ports handle diversified cargo such as coal, POL, automobiles and containers among others. Coal remains the major cargo handled at KPL, while for ChPA it is POL, apart from containers handled at both ports. The container terminals at ChPA and KPL are operated by reputed global and domestic port logistics players, with revenue-sharing and minimum guaranteed volume clauses in their contracts. Collectively, the two ports have a strong market position in the container segment, accounting for ~24% of India's container share in FY2026. Chennai International Terminals Private Limited and Chennai Container Terminals Private Limited operate the container terminals at ChPA, whereas Adani Ennore Container Terminal Private Limited handles the container terminal at KPL.

Credit challenges

Credit profile of consolidated entity impacted by large debt-funded acquisition of KPL – In March 2020, ChPA acquired the remaining 66.7% stake in KPL for Rs. 2,380 crore. The acquisition was funded through debt of Rs. 1,775 crore and the rest from internal resources, including cash and large advances from its customers. The acquisition provided operational synergies to ChPA by way of reducing common expenses, lowering competition and streamlining capacity planning in Chennai. However, the large interest and principal obligations have exerted some pressure on the capital structure and the coverage indicators of the consolidated entity.

The repayments at ChPA are supported by the dividends received from KPL as the cash accruals generated at ChPA at a standalone level, over the years, were insufficient to service the debt obligations. ChPA also maintains a 3-month DSRA account during the debt period. The repayment tenure is spread over 15 years with a ballooning structure, and the dividend payments from KPL will be routed through an escrow account. The financial profile of KPL has remained strong due to healthy profitability over the years, driven by its landlord port model and high revenue share from concessionaires. KPL paid a dividend of Rs. 300 crore for FY2026. Proceeds from the proposed IPO of KPL would be used primarily to fully repay the outstanding term loan obligations of ChPA.

While ChPA's capex plans amount to Rs. 151.58 crore, KPL has capex of Rs. 320 crore in FY2027. This includes dredging, connectivity improvements, etc., most of which are expected to be funded through internal accruals. Further, KPL has commitments towards land transfer and other expenses in the Great Nicobar Project as well as IPO expenses which would be reimbursed by ChPA.

As on March 31, 2026, KPL's contingent liability stood at Rs. 2,093.25 crore, majorly due to arbitration proceedings brought by a BOT operator citing various delays and changes in law. The contingent liabilities also include the claims raised by contractors towards contract/supply work. ICRA notes that the appellate tribunal judgement for the arbitration proceedings has been unfavourable for the company. It has appealed against the same to the High Court. Any adverse developments in this case would remain a key monitorable.

Profitability impacted by large pension liabilities and high employee expense of ChPA – ChPA is one of the oldest operating major ports in India. At the standalone level, it has a large employee base of 2,178 and 14,093 pensioners as of March 2026. The large annual employee and pension expenses adversely impact the operating profitability of the consolidated entity. In addition, the large total deficit position of Rs. 3,935.75 crore as on March 31, 2026 (significantly increased from Rs. 2,655.37 crore in FY2025 due to the wage revision) in the pension, leave encashment and gratuity funds of ChPA (compared to actuarial estimates of liabilities) necessitates regular contribution from the P&L account to these funds, which further impacts the operating profitability. As on March 31, 2026, the net worth position, adjusted for the deficit, was significantly negative with pension liabilities increasing on account of the wage revision. The profitability, though improved in FY2026, remains negatively impacted owing to the high employee costs and contributions. Although the pension payment to retirees and the employee expenses are expected to moderate gradually over the medium-to-long term, ChPA's deficit position in the pension fund is likely to continue over the next 10-15 years and gradually reduce upon the regular contribution from the revenue account. However, depending on the IPO of KPL, the deficit position may be resolved earlier.

High competition and cargo volatility – ChPA and KPL face competition from other ports in the vicinity, such as the Kattupalli and Krishnapatnam ports. Nonetheless, the risk is mitigated for the consolidated entity by expected synergies, presence of captive cargo (like Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation Limited (TANGEDCO) for KPL and Chennai Petroleum Corporation Limited (CPCL) for ChPA) and the long-term contracts with reputed domestic and global container terminal operators with minimum guaranteed volumes and revenue-sharing agreements. Further, with coal accounting for ~52% of KPL's cargo, the performance of the port as well as that of the consolidated entity remains susceptible to fluctuations in coal demand.

Congestion issues – ChPA faces congestion issues, which impact cargo evacuation from the ports and, in some cases, have also caused cargo diversion to competing ports. However, this congestion is expected to reduce over the next few years upon the completion of road connectivity projects that are currently under construction.

Liquidity position: Adequate

At a consolidated level (including KPL), cash flows improved in FY2026, aided by higher volumes and the healthy profitability of KPL, as well as operating profits generated from ChPA. The debt repayments are ~Rs.138 crore in FY2027 and ~Rs.208.02 crore in FY2028. There is a capex requirement of Rs. 320 crore for KPL and Rs. 151.58 crore for ChPA in FY2027. However, the consolidated liquidity profile is likely to remain Adequate, supported by healthy fund flow from operations and unencumbered cash balances.

While ChPA's (standalone) fund flow from operations has been weak over the years due to the large employee base and pension expenses, the port authority has generated positive free cash flows, aided by healthy non-operating income in the form of interest from cash balances and interest and dividend from KPL. ChPA made a prepayment of ~Rs. 77.3 crore in FY2026, in addition to the scheduled repayment of Rs. 129 crore. The scheduled repayments are Rs. 133 crore in FY2027, Rs. 142 crore in FY2028 and Rs. 151 crore in FY2029, in line with the ballooning repayment structure of the debt. The liquidity profile is likely to be adequate, supported by expected dividend inflow from KPL, unencumbered cash balances and liquid investments (~Rs. 402.28 crore) as of March 2026. Further, successful completion of KPL's IPO would improve the liquidity.

At the standalone level, KPL has a healthy track record of strong fund flow from operations, although the free cash flows were impacted by the large capex incurred and the dividend paid. The company has near-term capex plans of Rs. 320, with a large dividend payment to ChPA (Rs. 300 crore in FY2026) and moderate repayment obligation of ~Rs. 28.01 crore in FY2027 and ~Rs. 66.68 crore in FY2027 (including repayment of loans from ChPA). However, the liquidity is expected to remain Adequate, supported by unencumbered cash balances and liquid investments of Rs. 407.87 crore as on March 31, 2026.

Rating sensitivities

Positive factors – ChPA's rating could be upgraded if the consolidated entity can demonstrate steady cargo growth, leading to higher revenues and cash accruals on a sustained basis, while maintaining profitability and a stable working capital intensity.

Negative factors – Pressure on ChPA's rating may arise if the consolidated entity's financial profile weakens due to lower cash accruals with a significant drop in volumes or margins on a sustained basis, owing to competition or adverse economic trends. A large debt-funded capex weakening the liquidity profile will also affect the ratings. Moreover, a reduction in the sovereign ownership of the authority or a dilution in its strategic importance may trigger a downward rating revision. These apart, any adverse outcome regarding contingent liabilities would exert pressure on the rating.

Analytical approach

Analytical approach	Comments
Applicable rating methodologies	Corporate Credit Rating Methodology Rating Methodology – Ports

Analytical approach	Comments
Parent/Group support	Parent: Government of India (GoI) The rating derives comfort from the sovereign ownership of ChPA and its strategic importance to the GoI.
Consolidation/Standalone	For arriving at the rating, ICRA has taken a consolidated view of ChPA and KPL. The rating is based on the consolidated financial profile of ChPA and KPL. Refer to Annexure II for the list of entities considered for consolidation

About the company

Chennai Port Authority

Formerly known as Madras Port, Chennai Port Authority (ChPA) officially commenced operations in 1881, although maritime trade started much earlier in 1639 on the undeveloped shore. An artificial and all-weather port with wet docks, ChPA is the third-oldest port among the 14 major ports of India and is a major hub for containers, automobiles and project cargo on the eastern coast. While the port had traditionally been a bulk port catering to the requirements of power generators, oil refineries and steel/aluminium plants in the primary hinterland of southern India, it handled coal, iron ore, liquid and dry bulk as the majority of its overall cargo mix. However, in the last decade, following a shift of coal and iron ore cargo to the KPL and the commissioning of container terminals, the port has predominantly become a container handling port followed by liquid and other break-bulk cargo. At present, the port has two container terminals operating within the landlord concept, run separately by DP World Pvt. Ltd. and Singapore's PSA International Pte Ltd., with a combined capacity to handle 2.5 million Twenty-foot Equivalent Units (TEU) per year. The port trust also functions as a terminal operator for some of its berths, handling general cargo, including liquid, dry bulk and break bulk.

Subsequent to the Major Ports Authority Act, the Chennai Port Trust has been renamed Chennai Port Authority and the Act vests the administration, control and management upon the board of ChPA.

Kamarajar Port Limited

Kamarajar Port Limited (KPL; erstwhile Ennore Port Limited), incorporated in 1999, is a major port located 24 km north of Chennai. It was declared a major port under the Indian Ports Act in March 1999 and was the first major port to be incorporated under the Companies Act, 1956. The port was dedicated to the nation in February 2001 and commenced operations in June 2001, with two dedicated coal berths handling thermal coal for the power stations of Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation Limited (TANGEDCO). The Ennore Port was originally conceived as a satellite port to ChPA, primarily to handle thermal coal to meet the requirements of TNEB (now TANGEDCO); subsequently, its scope was expanded to enable KPL to handle other cargo. The port largely functions within the landlord concept, wherein new terminals are developed through the BOT model by private operators. Earlier, the GoI held a 66.7% stake in KPL with the remaining stake held by ChPA. However, on March 27, 2020, ChPA acquired the entire stake from the GoI, and KPL became a wholly owned subsidiary of ChPA.

Key financial indicators

Chennai Port Authority (standalone)	FY2025	FY2026 (Prov)
Operating income (OI)	1,094.34	1,185.02
PAT	84.6	328.9
OPBDIT/OI (%)	-11.9%	15.9%
PAT/OI	7.7%	27.8%
Total outside liabilities/Tangible net worth (times)	1.0	0.7
Total outside liabilities/Tangible net worth (times)#	-178.7	-11.8
Total debt/OPBDITA (times)	-8.6	4.9
Interest coverage (times)	-1.3	2.4

PAT: Profit after tax; OPBDIT: Operating profit before depreciation, interest, taxes and amortisation; Amount in Rs. crore

#TNW adjusted for deficit in pension liabilities

#ChPA's books are maintained under the mercantile system (accrual basis) of accounting. The trust had formed the Pension Fund Trust and Gratuity Fund Trust as separate entities and the financial statements of these trusts are excluded from the financial statements of ChPA. While the pension payments for employees retired before November 2002 are recognised in ChPA account, the pension payments of employees retired after November 2002 are made through pension and gratuity funds. ICRA has consolidated all three accounts and has adjusted the asset-liability position considering the corpus and liabilities of the pension and gratuity funds. Further, ICRA has treated the pension expenses and contribution to pension and gratuity funds as operating expense.

Chennai Port Authority (consolidated)	FY2025	FY2026 (Prov)
Operating income (OI)	2,232.76	2,424.17
PAT	233.9	624.9
OPBDIT/OI (%)	36.6%	50.4%
PAT/OI	10.5%	25.8%
Total outside liabilities/Tangible net worth (times)#	3.78	5.22
Total debt/OPBDIT (times)	1.76	1.03
Interest coverage (times)	6.3	11.4

PAT: Profit after tax; OPBDIT: Operating profit before depreciation, interest, taxes and amortisation

#TNW adjusted for deficit in pension liabilities

#ChPA's books are maintained under the mercantile system (accrual basis) of accounting. The trust had formed the Pension Fund Trust and Gratuity Fund Trust as separate entities and the financial statements of these trusts are excluded from the financial statements of ChPA. While the pension payments for employees retired before November 2002 are recognised in ChPA account, the pension payments of employees retired after November 2002 are made through pension and gratuity funds. ICRA has consolidated all three accounts and has adjusted the asset-liability position considering the corpus and liabilities of the pension and gratuity funds. Further, ICRA has treated the pension expenses and contribution to pension and gratuity funds as operating expense.

Status of non-cooperation with previous CRA: Not applicable

Any other information: None

Rating history for past three years

Instrument	Current rating			Chronology of rating history for the past 3 years					
	FY2027			FY2026		FY2025		FY2024	
	Type	Amount rated (Rs. crore)	Sep 18, 2026	Date	Rating	Date	Rating	Date	Rating
Term loans	Long term	1,775.0	[ICRA]AA-(Stable)	Sep 18, 2025	[ICRA]AA-(Stable)	Sep 18, 2024	[ICRA]AA-(Stable)	Sep 19, 2023	[ICRA]AA-(Stable)

Complexity level of the rated instruments

Instrument	Complexity indicator
Long term – Fund-based – Term loan	Simple

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	Financial Sector Regulator [#]
-	Term loan	Mar 2020	7.10%	Mar 2035	1775.0	[ICRA]AA- (Stable)	RBI

Source: Company;

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[Please click here to view details of lender-wise facilities rated by ICRA](#)

Annexure II: List of entities considered for consolidated analysis

Company name	ChPA ownership	Consolidation approach
Chennai Port Trust	100.00% (rated entity)	Full consolidation
Kamarajar Port Limited	100.00%	Full consolidation

Source: ChPA annual report

Note: ICRA has taken a consolidated view of ChPA and its subsidiary Kamarajar Port Limited.

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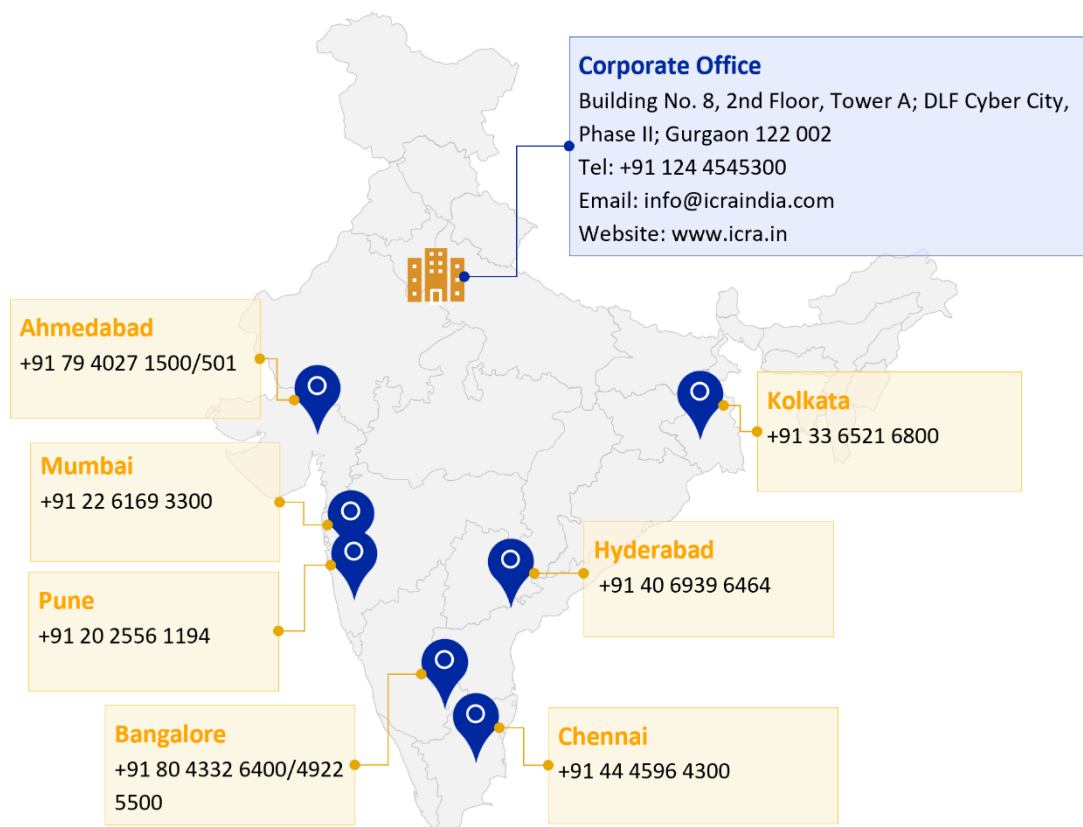


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