CFA Society India

GIFT CITY NEWSLETTER 2026

Positioning India as a Global Financial Centre

ATTRACTING GLOBAL CAPITAL

WORLD-CLASS REGULATION

FUTURE-READY INFRASTRUCTURE

POWERING INDIA'S GROWTH STORY

CONTENTS

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

SANDEEP GUPTA, CFA, CIPM
Director, CFA Society India

Welcome to this special edition of the CFA Society India Newsletter, dedicated to International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA); Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City. For those of us who have spent careers in finance, this issue carries a particular resonance. It asks a question that would have seemed almost rhetorical a decade ago: what if India could finally keep its own financial activity at home?

For too long, India-linked finance was structured offshore, in Singapore, Dubai, London, not because of any inherent advantage those jurisdictions held, but because we lacked a credible domestic alternative. GIFT City changes that equation fundamentally.

As someone who has been tracking the development of IFSC and the investment ecosystem around it, I can say with conviction that we are witnessing a genuine structural shift, not merely a policy announcement.

GIFT City is not a concession to globalisation. It is India's assertion that it can set the regulatory, financial, and intellectual terms on which global capital engages with the world's fastest-growing major economy.

The establishment of IFSCA as a unified regulator, combining the powers of RBI, SEBI, IRDAI, and PFRDA under a single roof, has removed one of the most persistent frictions that kept global financial activity offshore. In my own article in this issue, I explore how India has moved from being a spectator in global finance to becoming a host, and what that means for the professionals who will build this new chapter.

This edition assembles a remarkable range of perspectives, from the mechanics of feeder and master fund structures under IFSC, to the transformation of India's bullion market, from the talent retention story at GIFT City to the rise of Treasury Centres. Each piece illuminates a different facet of why this matter for our profession and for India's economic future.

A QUARTER OF STRONG MOMENTUM: JAN TO MAR 2026

The quarter that produced this newsletter was also one of our most active. Across professional learning, career development, research, and community, the Society operated at full stride, and in doing so, reflected two themes that CFA Institute itself has placed at the centre of the profession's evolution: **private markets** and **artificial intelligence.**

CFA Institute has recently introduced dedicated private markets and AI tracks to the Level III curriculum, among the most significant changes to the CFA Program in its history. It has also published foundational research on AI in asset management, positioning these not as niche interests but as core competencies for the modern investment professional. Our programming this quarter was deeply aligned with that direction.

The **2nd Private Markets Conference in Bengaluru** was a particular highlight, building on last year's inaugural edition and cementing our position as the go-to platform for private markets dialogue in India. Alongside the Private Credit sessions at both the Mumbai and Delhi Financial Talent Summits, the quarter demonstrated the depth of member appetite for this asset class. This is entirely in step with CFA Institute's view that private markets literacy is no longer optional for investment professionals; it is foundational. The AI thread ran through the entire quarter, from Kolkata to Chennai to Pune, with workshops moving decisively from theory to application: equity research, algorithmic strategies, and practical tools.

The **GIFT City 2.0 full-day conference** on 6 March brought together practitioners on cross-border investments and fund structuring, a fitting preview of this newsletter's theme. **The 16th India Investment Conference** drew 486 attendees — a reflection of the undiminished appetite for rigorous investment dialogue. Our **Ethics, Governance & Sustainability Conference** brought together 185 senior professionals and culminated in the launch of a significant report on Sustainable Debt and India's green transition. The Financial Talent Summit reached new highs of employer participation across Mumbai, Delhi, and Bengaluru. And India Insights, our thought leadership publication, published its April 2026 edition with a debut Young Manager Series, the kind of programming that ensures the next generation of investment professionals finds a home in our Society.

The CFA Society India Podcast continues to grow its listener community, with wide-ranging conversations spanning emerging industry trends, hosted by member volunteers and available across Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and YouTube. We have made significant strides in our Socials. Our LinkedIn community now exceeds 120,000 members; our YouTube channel has crossed 75,000 subscribers. The Enterprising Investor blog writing workshop we hosted with CFA Institute editors in February is a sign of the editorial ambition we carry into this year. These are not just numbers; they are the reach of a community that takes knowledge seriously.

The **Financial Talent Summit,** our marquee career event, reached new highs across all three cities, with record employer participation and 300+ delegates in both Mumbai and Delhi. The addition of dedicated private credit sessions in each city gave the Summit added depth for senior professionals. The **5th Masters at Work in Kolkata** continued its tradition as one of our most anticipated learning experiences of the year.

Our community milestones were equally meaningful. **The Annual Diversity Event, Vision to Value,** brought together over 100 delegates with a powerful message about inclusion in the investment profession. The **CFA and CIPM Charter Felicitation Ceremony ceremonies** spanned 9 locations this quarter, drawing 1,600+ members and Level III pass-outs with a 95%+ attendance rate; recognizing individuals who have made an extraordinary commitment to professional excellence and ethical practice by clearing the rigorous exams and joining this community.

In March, the Society brought together senior and active volunteers from across the country at a **Volunteer Meet in Mumbai,** recognising their contributions as part of the **Society's 20-year milestone,** reaffirming that the Society's strength has always been the people who give their time to it. I want to close with gratitude. This newsletter exists because of the extraordinary effort of our volunteer editorial team, **Shivani, Hardik, Krishna, Mihir,** and many others, who spent months researching, interviewing, and writing. Their work is a testament to what a member-driven Society can produce. I also want to acknowledge our interviewees and contributors who generously shared their expertise. The support of the CFA Society Staff was exemplary as usual.

I hope this edition leaves you, as it has left me, with a renewed sense of what this moment represents for Indian finance, and for the profession we share.

Warm regards,

SANDEEP GUPTA, CFA, CIPM
Director, CFA Society India

INTERVIEW WITH
MR. SANDIP SHAH

?

HARDIK PANDYA

What, in your view, is driving top-tier Indian finance professionals to increasingly consider GIFT City over traditional global hubs like Singapore or London?

A

SANDIP SHAH

Over the past few years, GIFT City has steadily begun to feature in the Wtraditionally have gravitated toward global financial centres.

This shift is being driven by a confluence of structural factors.

First, GIFT City offers a unique proposition: the ability to operate in a globally oriented financial ecosystem while remaining anchored in India. Professionals can engage in cross-border transactions, global fund structuring, and international wealth management within a regulatory framework specifically designed for international financial services.

Second, there is a growing "reverse diaspora" trend. Experienced professionals are increasingly recognising the opportunity to return to India, not merely for lifestyle reasons, but to participate in the early formation of a globally competitive financial hub. In contrast to mature markets, GIFT City offers the ability to take on leadership roles and create long-term value as the ecosystem evolves.

Third, India's rising prominence in global capital flows is a significant factor. Being physically and professionally closer to India-linked opportunities—while still operating within an international financial jurisdiction—provides a compelling strategic advantage.

Finally, the overall value proposition—balancing compensation, cost of living, and proximity to personal networks—makes GIFT City a highly competitive alternative to traditional global hubs.

?

HARDIK PANDYA

How do you see the regulatory framework, infrastructure, and overall ecosystem at GIFT City supporting high-quality, globally competitive financial work?

A

SANDIP SHAH

The progress of GIFT City can be attributed to a carefully designed combination of regulatory innovation and infrastructure development.

At the core lies the International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA), which serves as a unified regulator. This has enabled a more streamlined and responsive regulatory environment compared to the fragmented frameworks often seen in larger jurisdictions. The regulatory approach has been pragmatic and progressive, facilitating the establishment of alternative investment funds, global treasury centres, insurance operations, and family offices.

Complementing this is the city's purpose-built infrastructure. Designed as an integrated financial services hub, GIFT City offers high-quality commercial spaces, robust digital connectivity, and Special Economic Zone (SEZ) advantages that are aligned with the operational needs of global financial institutions.

Equally important is the growing institutional presence. A wide spectrum of global and domestic players—across banking, asset management, insurance, leasing, and financial technology—has established or is actively expanding operations within the IFSC. This, in turn, is creating a virtuous cycle, attracting talent and deepening capability.

Additionally, GIFT City benefits from a favourable time-zone positioning, allowing institutions to effectively service clients across Asia, Europe, and, to some extent, North America.

INTERVIEW WITH
MR. SANDIP SHAH

?

HARDIK PANDYA

While the progress has been significant, what are some key areas that still need to evolve for GIFT City to truly establish itself as a world-class talent magnet?

A

SANDIP SHAH

While the trajectory has been impressive, certain areas will need continued focus for GIFT City to firmly establish itself as a world-class financial and talent hub.

A primary area is the depth of specialised talent. While the talent pool is expanding, there remains a relative shortage of highly specialised expertise in areas such as structured finance, complex derivatives, and global markets trading. Building this depth will require sustained collaboration between industry, academia, and training institutions.

Second, social infrastructure will play a critical role in attracting global talent. For senior professionals—especially expatriates—factors such as international schooling, healthcare quality, and lifestyle amenities are essential considerations. Continued development in these areas will enhance GIFT City's global appeal.

Third, market depth and liquidity need to scale up further. The long-term success of any financial centre is anchored in the vibrancy of its markets. Increasing participation, expanding product offerings, and fostering deeper capital market activity will be key.

Finally, global positioning and perception will matter. While GIFT City has made substantial progress, sustained efforts in branding, policy consistency, and international engagement will be necessary to position it alongside established hubs such as Singapore and Dubai.

?

HARDIK PANDYA

From your perspective at Eton Solutions, how do institutions contribute to building this ecosystem and strengthening GIFT City's position as a global financial hub?

A

SANDIP SHAH

Institutions operating in GIFT City are not merely participants; they are co-creators of the ecosystem.

From the perspective of firms such as Eton Solutions, which focus on family office and wealth management platforms, the opportunity lies in bringing global best practices and institutional-grade capabilities into the ecosystem. This is particularly relevant as GIFT City emerges as a hub for cross-border wealth structuring and family office activity.

Such institutions contribute in multiple ways.

They enable operational sophistication—through technology, governance frameworks, and reporting standards—which is essential for attracting and retaining global capital. They also play a critical role in talent development, creating specialised roles and helping build the next generation of professionals equipped to operate in an international financial environment.

Importantly, the presence of globally credible firms has a strong signalling effect. It builds confidence among investors, encourages further institutional participation, and reinforces the credibility of the ecosystem as a whole.

In addition, ongoing engagement between industry participants and the regulator fosters a dynamic and responsive policy environment. This collaborative approach is a defining strength of GIFT City's development model.

?

HARDIK PANDYA

To conclude, looking ahead, what gives you the strongest confidence that GIFT City can emerge as a globally respected financial and talent hub over the next decade?

A

SANDIP SHAH

GIFT City represents a distinctive and evolving model in the global financial landscape—one that combines India's growth trajectory with international financial architecture.

For professionals, it offers a rare blend of global exposure, leadership opportunity, and participation in a high-growth ecosystem. For institutions, it presents the opportunity not only to operate, but to shape the very contours of a new financial centre.

While there is still ground to cover, the direction is clear. With continued policy support, ecosystem development, and institutional engagement, GIFT City is well-positioned to emerge as a significant global financial hub in the years ahead.

ABOUT
SANDIP SHAH

Mr. Sandip Shah is Chief business officer at ETON Solutions, bringing over 16 years of strategic expertise in financial services, international finance, regulatory & policy developments, and fintech innovation. A thought leader in International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) development and financial technology advancement, Sandip has been instrumental in shaping India's global financial infrastructure and wealth management ecosystem. Mr. Shah has authored a book on "GIFT IFSC – a comprehensive guide". Mr. Shah has been awarded 40 under 40 Investment Professionals in 2022.

He has been involved since the inception of International Financial Services Centre in India. He led various initiatives with IFSC Authority, Ministry of Finance, RBI, SEBI and IRDAI to develop and promote IFSC globally. He was also instrumental in preparing key regulatory proposals for IFSC business activities At ETON Solutions, Mr. Shah closely works with family offices, private equity firms and multi asset managers to provide fully integrated, AI-powered wealth management platform. Mr. Shah leads business development, drives international market expansion, and develops strategic partnerships that advance Eton Solutions' mission of transforming global wealth and fund management operations. Eton Solutions is a technology company dedicated to addressing the complexities of family offices and private equity firms globally. US headquartered firm, having more than 960+ families with US$ 1 tn+ assets managed on platform.

Mr. Shah has worked extensively in various Committees formed by the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Commerce, and IFSC Authority in the areas of international financial services. Mr. Shah has played pivotal role for the establishment of International Fintech Institute and innovation hub jointly with Asian Development Bank. In his last assignment, Mr. Shah was designated as the Project Director of this prestigious fintech hub.

Mr. Sandip Shah is a Bachelor of Commerce and Master of Business Administration with a specialization in International Finance. Mr. Shah also holds Diploma in Foreign Exchange and Risk Management and Company Secretary – Intermediate from Institute of Company Secretaries of India. He is also an alumnus of XLRI's Executive Program in Strategy and Leadership. He has previously worked with HSBC in the Securities Market division and National Securities Depository Ltd (NSDL) in Mumbai between 2010 to 2015. He has in his earlier assignment worked for operationalizing India's first Insurance Repository.

MR. SANDIP SHAH

Chief business officer at ETON Solutions

INTERVIEW WITH
MR. SHAILESH DHURI

?

SHIVANI SUVARNA

With rising geopolitical fragmentation: US–China tensions, supply chain shifts, and capital realignment, how do you see GIFT City positioning itself in the global financial ecosystem over the next 5–10 years?

A

SHAILESH DHURI

Fragmentation is the opportunity, not the threat. For three decades, every India-linked dollar flow had effectively two address choices — London or Singapore.

Over the next decade I expect GIFT to capture three layers: re-domiciliation of India-focused offshore funds that currently sit in Mauritius and Singapore; the derivatives and clearing layer for India risk that today resides at SGX and DGCX; and a meaningful share of West Asian sovereign capital looking for a neutral, non-aligned venue with depth in Indian assets.

The trap to avoid is trying to be Singapore-lite or Dubai-with-vegetarian-food. Those benchmarks are decoys. GIFT's only durable mandate is to be the most efficient global access ramp to the Indian economy.

?

SHIVANI SUVARNA

With growing discussions around de-dollarization and the internationalization of the rupee, what role can GIFT City play in building a credible offshore INR market? What are the constraints today?

A

SHAILESH DHURI

Currency internationalization rests on three pillars: trust, liquidity, and the size of the real economy underneath. India has the third pillar comfortably; trust is rising; the missing pillar is liquidity at scale.

The constraint is not policy will. It is sequence. The RBI has correctly resisted full capital account convertibility because the domestic banking system, the corporate bond market, and the corporate hedging culture are still maturing. You cannot internationalize a currency whose own onshore yield curve is incomplete past ten years.

GIFT's near-term play is more pragmatic. First, bring the offshore NDF market home — that flow is already INR-denominated and currently rents space in Singapore and London. Second, anchor regional settlement with the immediate neighbourhood — Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh — and then with the UAE for energy. Third, build a real rupee-denominated bond issuance market for Indian corporates raising offshore, which gives global investors a reason to hold INR for yield, not just for trade.

Reserve currency status is a destination. Offshore INR settlement infrastructure is the road. GIFT can pave the road; the destination will arrive when it arrives.

INTERVIEW WITH
MR. SHAILESH DHURI

?

SHIVANI SUVARNA

GIFT City has launched an AI Centre of Excellence and a Fintech Innovation Hub that has already onboarded over 30 startups. As a data analytics firm operating in financial services, where does Decimal Point Analytics see the biggest white spaces at GIFT City — whether in risk modelling, regulatory reporting, or alternative data?

A

SHAILESH DHURI

The fashionable answer is AI in trading. The honest answer is regulatory plumbing.

Three white spaces, in ascending order of size. Alternative data for India risk — satellite imagery for port congestion, electricity load for industrial activity, GST e-way bill velocity for real-time GDP nowcasting — most of this exists in raw form and is structurally unrefined. India-specific risk models for credit, counterparty, and operational risk — the global vendor models are calibrated to OECD data and miss the actual structure of Indian defaults, fraud pathologies, and seasonality. And the boring crown jewel: regulatory reporting infrastructure for IFSCA, where every entity that sets up at GIFT must file. That is a utility play with annuity economics.

On the AI Centre of Excellence — the durable moat in financial AI will not be the models. It will be the specifications: the codified domain knowledge that tells a model what "good" looks like in a specific workflow. We call this the Specification Era. GIFT can lead globally if it positions itself as the place where India's deep domain knowledge in finance gets converted into machine-executable specifications.

?

SHIVANI SUVARNA

From a practitioner's perspective, what are the biggest operational or regulatory challenges companies still face when setting up or scaling in GIFT City?

A

SHAILESH

Four frictions, ranked by what slows companies down.

One, talent geography. Persuading senior finance and analytics professionals to relocate from Mumbai, Bangalore, or Singapore to Gandhinagar is a real hurdle. The hub-and-spoke model — book at GIFT, work elsewhere — is a pragmatic workaround, but it dilutes the agglomeration effect that financial centres need.

Two, the unfinished plumbing between domestic and IFSC entities. Many banking, compliance, and tax workflows still treat a GIFT entity as a hybrid creature. The single-window promise is real on paper; in practice you are still dealing with multiple regulators with overlapping mandates.

Three, dispute resolution speed. Sophisticated financial businesses underwrite jurisdiction risk by looking at how fast and how predictably a commercial dispute gets resolved. GIFT needs a dedicated fast-track commercial bench with global judicial credibility.

Four, the cost differential versus Mumbai is narrower than it needs to be to drive forced migration. Real estate, the talent premium, and travel costs eat into the tax arbitrage.

?

SHIVANI SUVARNA

Dubai and Singapore have decades of head start. What is GIFT City's genuine edge, and where are the gaps?

A

SHAILESH DHURI

Dubai and Singapore are not the right comparison set. Dubai is a logistics and lifestyle hub that built finance on top. Singapore is a city-state whose entire identity is its regulator. Both have decades of muscle memory we will not replicate, and we should stop trying.

GIFT's genuine edge is asymmetric: it is the only major IFSC with a four-trillion-dollar economy attached to it, growing at six to seven percent. That is the only edge that compounds. Every other edge — tax, regulation, lifestyle — can be copied. Access to a continent-sized growth story cannot.

The gaps are mostly soft infrastructure. International schooling, healthcare at expat standards, predictable commercial law, depth of English-medium professional services, and a thriving social ecosystem for senior decision-makers. None of these are unsolvable; all of them take ten to fifteen years of deliberate building.

The wrong question is "how do we beat Singapore." The right question is "what part of the global financial value chain is mispriced when measured against the Indian growth story, and how do we capture it."

INTERVIEW WITH
MR. SHAILESH DHURI

?

SHIVANI SUVARNA

What's the one development at GIFT City right now that excites you?

A

SHAILESH DHURI

One development that excites me Waiting for it. Regulations for tokenization.

Rapid Fire (on a lighter note)

?

SHIVANI SUVARNA

One word to describe GIFT City today?

A

SHAILESH DHURI

Underpriced

?

SHIVANI SUVARNA

The one regulatory change GIFT City needed yesterday?

A

SHAILESH DHURI

1. A dedicated commercial dispute bench with binding global arbitration credibility.
2. ROC of its own in GIFT City.

?

SHIVANI SUVARNA

Biggest myth people believe about GIFT City?

A

SHAILESH DHURI

That GIFT competes with Mumbai. It does not. It complements Mumbai by capturing the flows that today leak offshore.

?

SHIVANI SUVARNA

One book every finance professional should read right now?

A

SHAILESH DHURI

Mumbai was already IFSC for the Gulf in 1950s. India lost it because we did not act prudently. This book lays it out all. https://www.amazon.com/Monetary-History-Gulf-States/dp/140394587X. Every crisis is opportunity. However, we are not creating opportunity out of Iran crisis, sadly though.

ABOUT
SHAILESH DHURI

Shailesh Dhuri is a Co-founder & CEO of Decimal Point Analytics. With nearly 30 years of experience in entrepreneurship, fund management, and AI-powered data analytics, Decimal Point Analytics is led by Co-founder and CEO Shailesh Dhuri, with a focus on innovation-driven growth.

An alumnus of prestigious Indian institutions, his qualifications include an MBA from IIM Bangalore, FRM from GARP, PRM from PRMIA, CFA from ICFAI, CWA from ICWAI, and a Bachelor of Commerce from Mumbai University. He is recognized as a leader and innovator in the practical application of AI technologies for large-scale data, quantitative analysis, and algorithm development.

Early in his career, Shailesh contributed to establishing Unit Trust of India's first private sector bank and launching India's first money market fund in the 1990s. He has built successful businesses and supported notable organizations in creating dynamic and sustainable environments.

Currently, Shailesh oversees growth strategy, financial planning, corporate governance, and risk analysis for Decimal Point Analytics. He also serves as a board member, driving business strategy, audit planning, and risk management to expand existing and new industry verticals.

SHAILESH DHURI

Co-founder & CEO of Decimal Point Analytics.

ABOUT
SHIVANI SUVARNA

Shivani Suvarna is a finance professional with extensive experience in credit analysis. She currently serves as Associate Vice President at Impact Investment Exchange, where she works with the credit portfolio management team on the Women's Livelihood Bond Series. Prior to this, she worked with India Ratings and Research and HSBC. Shivani is a Chartered Accountant and a CFA Charterholder, and holds a Bachelor of Commerce degree from University of Mumbai. She is also an active volunteer with CFA Society India, contributing to the Public Awareness Committee.

SHIVANI SUVARNA, CFA

Member, Public Awareness Committee

GIFT IFSCA: INDIA'S GATEWAY TO GLOBAL FINANCE

A Vision Whose Time Has Come

India has long punched below its weight in global finance. Despite being the world's most populous nation, the fourth-largest economy, and home to one of Asia's most dynamic capital markets, Indian businesses have historically sought financial services from Singapore, Hong Kong, Mauritius, the Cayman Islands, and Dublin rather than from home. GIFT City, the Gujarat International Finance Tec-City is designed to change that.

Located in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, and regulated by the International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA), GIFT IFSCA is India's first and only unified International Financial Services Centre (IFSC). Established under the IFSCA Act of 2019 and operationalized from 2020, the centre has moved with remarkable speed from blueprint to reality. With over 1,100 registered entities, a banking asset base exceeding $104 billion, and monthly stock exchange turnover approaching $95 billion, GIFT IFSCA is no longer just a distant promise but a fast-growing Global Finance Hub.

India's ambition to achieve Viksit Bharat, a fully developed economy by 2047 demands a domestic financial architecture capable of channelling global capital into infrastructure, advanced manufacturing, clean energy, and technology. Historically, an estimated $70 billion in fund flows that now routes through GIFT would have been structured out of Mauritius or Singapore. Bringing that capital home is the core impact already achieved with the potential to scaling it many times over.

For CFA charterholders and candidates, the question is not whether GIFT IFSCA matters. It is whether you are positioned to lead within it. To lead, we must first know. Hence this special edition newsletter brought to you by the Public Awareness Committee of CFA Society India.

BY SANDEEP GUPTA, CFA, CPIM

CEO CornerBricks.com & Volunteer CFA Society India

Why GIFT IFSCA Matters

The IFSCA's most transformative feature is its unified regulatory architecture. Across 35 distinct business segments — banking, capital markets, insurance, pensions, fund management, aircraft leasing, ship leasing, fintech, and more, a single regulator applies internationally benchmarked rules. This stands in sharp contrast to India's domestic framework, which distributes oversight across the RBI, SEBI, IRDAI, and PFRDA. For a global institution seeking to operate across asset classes, the appeal of one regulator, one jurisdiction is immediately apparent.

The tax framework reinforces the regulatory advantage. Businesses operating from GIFT enjoy a 20-year income tax holiday under Section 80LA of the Income Tax Act, followed by a concessional rate structure. The centre also benefits from an extensive network of Double Taxation Avoidance Agreements (DTAAs) and is free from stamp duty on securities transactions and Goods and Services Tax on services rendered to overseas clients. FEMA regulations have been substantially relaxed to permit free movement of foreign currency within the IFSC.

The numbers, tell a compelling story

- **27 international banks** with combined assets exceeding **$104 billion**
- **Over 50% of India's External Commercial Borrowing** (ECB) now flows through GIFT City
- More than **400 aviation assets leased** to Indian carriers through GIFT matching erstwhile Global hubs like Dublin from where these were facilitated earlier
- Monthly derivatives turnover on **India INX and NSE IFSC exceeding $95 billion**
- Funds structured through GIFT have channelled over **$70 billion** into the Indian economy
- GIFT City has risen from r**ank 97 to rank 43** in the **Global Financial Centres Index (**GFCI), published by Z/Yen, London

For CFA Program professionals, this translates into concrete demand: valuation specialists for cross-border fund structures; risk managers for complex multi-currency portfolios; compliance officers fluent in IFSCA regulations alongside international frameworks; and ESG analysts as IFSCA advances its sustainable finance consultation papers.

The regulatory foundation at GIFT reflects a deliberate approach to learning from global best practices.

GIFT IFSCA in Global Context: Competing with the World's Best

Any honest assessment of GIFT IFSCA must benchmark it against the global league of IFSCs. The following table offers a structured comparison

Hub	Key Regulator	AUM / Assets	Key Strengths	India Relevance
GIFT IFSCA	IFSCA (Unified)	\$104B+ banking; \$70B+ fund flows	Cost advantage, unified oversight, rupee access	Domestic + global South gateway
Singapore	MAS	~\$4T AUM	Wealth management, tech, stability	Strong Indian diaspora presence
Dubai DIFC	DFSA	~\$500B+ AUM	Tax-free, Islamic finance, commodities	Gulf-India trade corridor
Luxembourg	CSSF	~€5T AUM	Fund domicile, EU passport	European fund access for India
Hong Kong	SFC / HKMA	~\$4.5T AUM	China gateway, deep capital markets	Asia-Pacific hub; geopolitical caution

Singapore's MAS-driven model, with its \$4 trillion AUM ecosystem, robust wealth management franchise, and deep technology integration remains the benchmark for Asia. Dubai's DIFC has carved out a dominant position in Islamic finance, commodities, and the Gulf-India trade corridor, leveraging a tax-free environment and exceptional lifestyle infrastructure. Luxembourg, with its €5 trillion fund domicile crown, continues to attract European fund managers through its UCITS and AIFMD passporting regimes.

Where does GIFT stand in this company? Closer than many expect. On aircraft leasing, IFSCA regulations now match Dublin on a line-item basis, a stunning achievement for a centre barely five years into full operation. On fund management, the Alternative Investment Fund (AIF) framework at GIFT has attracted structures that previously defaulted to Mauritius. On banking, 27 international institutions have committed capital to a lending ecosystem that provides M&A financing, syndicated loans, and structured products, services that Indian corporates once had to source exclusively from London or Singapore.

GIFT's edge lies in several structural advantages that its older peers cannot replicate: direct proximity to India's \$3.5 trillion economy; access to the world's largest pool of English-speaking financial talent at a fraction of Singapore or London cost; a government committed at the highest level to making this work; and critically for the next decade, an early-mover advantage in blockchain-based financial infrastructure and digital asset regulation.

The Frontier of Fintech

Beyond the established asset classes, GIFT IFSCA is positioning itself at the vanguard of financial innovation — and this is where the opportunity for CFA charterholders is most distinctive.

Real World Asset (RWA) tokenization, the process of representing ownership of physical or financial assets as blockchain-based tokens is rapidly moving from concept to institutional practice. IFSCA has issued consultation papers and sandbox frameworks that allow fintech entities to pilot tokenized bond issuances, tokenized real estate structures, and blockchain-based settlement systems within the IFSC. Indian infrastructure assets, commercial real estate portfolios, and receivables are all candidates for tokenization under these frameworks.

The CFA Program's emphasis on rigorous valuation, governance, and risk management makes CFA charterholders uniquely suited to navigate this terrain. Tokenized assets require robust fair value frameworks; smart contract-governed distributions require audit trails that meet fiduciary standards; and cross-border digital asset flows require compliance expertise that bridges Indian FEMA norms with international AML/KYC expectations.

The CFA Program Professional's Role

Specific opportunities CFA program professionals could explore at GIFT IFSCA

- **Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs), Category I, II, and III:** Managing venture capital, private equity, and hedge fund structures domiciled at GIFT with global LP bases
- **ESG and Sustainable Finance:** IFSCA's consultation paper on sustainable investments signals growing demand for ESG-credentialed analysts and portfolio managers
- **Fund Advisory and Distribution:** The IFSCA framework for International Financial Advisors, serving India's 35-million strong diaspora creates a new professional category for globally certified advisors
- **Infrastructure Funds:** Alignment between India's National Monetization Pipeline and long-duration pension/sovereign wealth capital creates structuring mandates that demand CFA program level modelling expertise
- **FinTech and RegTech:** Algo trading frameworks, electronic bond trading platforms, and digital asset pilots all require professionals with quantitative depth

The CFA Society India's engagement with GIFT is a strong signal of synergies. As the Executive Director of IFSCA observed, analysts and distributors are the two most critical actors for any financial centre's success. CFA charterholders are precisely those analysts.

Way Ahead: India's Turn to Export Financial Services

GIFT IFSCA has crossed the threshold from experiment to establishment. With over 1,100 registered entities, a rapidly maturing regulatory framework, and demonstrable traction across banking, capital markets, insurance, and aviation leasing, India's IFSC is no longer asking to be taken seriously, it is demanding it.

The ambition is clear: to position GIFT City among the world's top three International Financial Centres by 2030, attracting not just mid-and-back-office operations but front-office dealmakers, portfolio managers, and senior investment professionals. The infrastructure is being built, multi-utility tunnels, centralised cooling, premium residential and commercial districts to make Gandhinagar a genuinely liveable global city.

For CFA charterholders and candidates reading this, the invitation is direct. GIFT IFSCA spans 35 business segments under one regulatory roof. The CFA curriculum provides the analytical and ethical foundation to contribute across all of them. Whether your interest lies in fund structuring, tokenized assets, ESG mandates, infrastructure finance, or wealth advisory for the Indian diaspora and beyond, the opportunity is here, and it is now.

India spent decades exporting financial services to Singapore, Mauritius, and Dubai. GIFT IFSCA is the mechanism by which India reclaims that ground and builds upon it. CFA Society India members have both a professional stake and a global opportunity in making that vision a reality.

Sandeep Gupta, CFA | CEO CornerBricks.com & Volunteer CFA Society India

Views expressed are the author's own. Data sourced from IFSCA Annual Reports, RBI publications, Global Financial Centres Index (Z/Yen, 2024), and notes taken at the CFA Society India GIFT City Conference, Gandhinagar, March 2026.

ABOUT SANDEEP GUPTA

Sandeep Gupta, CFA, is an investment professional with extensive experience across private markets, alternative investments, and financial services. He is currently associated with CornerBricks and has held leadership roles across investment advisory and fintech-related platforms. Sandeep is an active contributor to the investment community through CFA Society India, where he serves as Board Director and Chair of the Public Awareness Committee.

He is also involved in professional learning initiatives, fintech conferences, and private markets discussions. An alumnus of the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad (IIMA), Sandeep holds the CFA charter, CIPM certification, and several industry certifications in investment advisory, portfolio management, and alternative investments.

SANDEEP GUPTA, CFA, CIPM

CEO CornerBricks.com | Director - CFA Society India

INTELLECTUAL HEFT AT HOME AND FOR THE GLOBE: HOW GIFT CITY RETAINS INDIA'S GLOBAL TALENT

A country gains intellectual heft when global authority sits within its borders and global decisions are made by its own talent and when those decisions are made on its own land. It would mean close to nothing if the country's growth curve for intellectual gravity is flat and merely stops at executing tasks, following orders and delivering outcomes designed elsewhere. Processing tasks for others creates employment; decision-making creates power. There is a thin line between "taking an order" and "deciding what the order should be." That is where India's GIFT City comes to the rescue, enabling a shift toward real power and authority: owning the balance sheet, approving strategies locally, ratifying decisions, and finally standing face to face with every major global financial hub, with the pride of India's rich commitment to honesty and integrity.

[1]As the World Economic Forum notes, by 2040, the size of the global working-age population will change significantly, shrinking in parts of the developed world while expanding in others and countries that fail to adapt, risk losing out on the talent needed for future growth. This clearly is a blessing in disguise where emerging market countries like India can effectively create a new roadmap for future talent where the destination for migration won't be any foreign hubs for global exposure, but it would be the domestic Gift City that provides the same global exposure.

BY HARDIK PANDYA, CA, CFA
Member – Public Awareness Committee, CFA Society India

The first question that comes to mind is why does Indian talent migrate?

- To opt for higher risk-adjusted compensation
- To accumulate skills
- To deploy those skills

But is it only about money or skills? Not really! Real top-tier talent ultimately moves where there is authority, where skills are valued and utilized to their highest potential. What builds intellectual heft is not only back-office work, but meaningful front-office decision-making.

India's GIFT City opens this door through relaxed regulations, strong legal certainty, a unified regulator and tax-efficient opportunities for talent that already possesses the skills to contribute globally all within the boundaries of India.

So where, in practice, is this shift toward authority and intellectual heft already visible in India?

Not Just Branches: India's Move into Global Treasury Control

Pre-GIFT City, Indian regulations largely required banks and NBFCs to operate INR-denominated balance sheets, with tight constraints on foreign-currency lending and borrowing. As a result, global asset–liability management (ALM) sat offshore. With GIFT City IFSC allowing dealing in multiple currencies without capital controls, this opens up opportunities to host global treasury centres, not just branches and to own funding and pricing decisions from India. Treasury heads, ALM specialists and funding strategists now own the balance sheet in India, rather than merely reporting to one abroad.

SGX Nifty to Gift Nifty: A Strategic Shift for Capital Markets and Talent

SGX Nifty was a futures contract linked to India's Nifty 50, traded on the Singapore Exchange. Global investors used it to take positions on Indian markets outside Indian trading hours. While it reflected India's market, the trading and influence sat offshore. GIFT Nifty is the same contract, now traded at NSE IFSC in GIFT City. The product remains global in nature, but price discovery, regulation, and revenues have moved back to India's international financial centre.

This transition also unlocks a deeper opportunity for talent and asset management. Earlier, Indian funds faced currency limits, tax inefficiencies, and regulatory friction, pushing global fund structures to offshore hubs like Singapore or Cayman Islands. Indian teams largely supported research, not decision-making. IFSC regulations now allow fund domiciliation in India, global capital pooling in foreign currency and overseas investing without FEMA hurdles. As a result, portfolio construction, asset allocation, and risk decisions can happen from India, not just execution or analysis. For talent, this is decisive. When fund managers have portfolio authority, not just analyst roles, intellectual capital stays. That is the real long-term gain of GIFT City.

When Brand Power Comes Home

Most young professionals aspire to build their careers with organizations that carry strong brand value, an established reputation, and veteran leadership. This psychological bias often leads talent to move toward global financial hubs when such brand anchors appear absent in domestic opportunities. GIFT City bridges this gap. A growing number of well-known, reputed, and listed Indian and global institutions have established operations in GIFT City to serve international investors. In doing so, they are creating high-quality, globally relevant roles within India, allowing Indian talent to work with brand names, global balance sheets, and international mandates without needing to migrate.

[2]As per official data from the Government of India, 409 companies were operating in GIFT City's International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) as of July 31, 2025, up sharply from just 82 in October 2020, nearly a five-fold increase in core financial services firms. This reflects rapid adoption of banking, fund management, insurance and related activities within the IFSC.

[3]In addition, 1,034+ entities were registered in the GIFT IFSC ecosystem as of November 28, 2025, encompassing not only core financial services but also allied support services such as fintech, legal, compliance, consulting and technology providers, underscoring the broad growth of the global financial hub.

This quantitative growth both in core financial firms and in the wider ecosystem signals a sharp rise in India's intellectual heft, creating globally relevant opportunities for young talent without the need to migrate.

The Opportunity Map

Who's in GIFT City and What Roles Are Being Built

Main Sector[3]	Sub-Sector[3]	Representative Entities[3]	Strategic Roles & Opportunities
Banking	Global Banks	Standard Chartered, HSBC, J.P. Morgan, Citi, Deutsche Bank, BNP Paribas, Barclays	FX Trader, Treasury Portfolio Analyst, Credit Risk Officer Corporate, Relationship Manager Multinational Corporates, International Payments Compliance Lead
Banking	Asian Majors	Mizuho, MUFG, ANZ, QNB, DBS	Trade Finance Specialist, Liquidity Risk Manager, Balance Sheet Optimization Analyst,ALM Specialist
Banking	Multilateral	New Development Bank	Infrastructure Finance Analyst, ESG Investment Specialist, Syndication Officer, Development Project Risk Assessor
Alternative Investment Funds	Sovereign & Global	ADIA, Morgan Stanley	Portfolio Strategist, Asset Allocation Analyst, Global Macro Research Analyst, Sovereign Wealth Portfolio Manager
Alternative Investment Funds	Growth & PE	Lightrock, Lighthouse Canton, Bering	Private Equity Associate, Growth Equity Sector Lead, Due Diligence Specialist, Fund Operations Head
Alternative Investment Funds	Specialist / Others	Onyx, Decimal Point	Quantitative Risk Analyst, Fund Compliance Specialist, Risk Monitoring Officer
FinTech / Tech	Large Tech Services	Wipro, Infosys, Cognizant	Financial Solutions Architect, Cloud Engineering Lead Banking Platforms, AI ML Financial Model Developer
FinTech / Tech	FinTech Platforms	KFintech, Signzy	Product Manager Digital Lending, Fraud Risk Analytics Specialist, RegTech Developer
FinTech / Tech	Specialized Solutions	Intellect Design, ISG	Core Banking Systems Engineer, Software Delivery Manager, Financial Data Analytics Lead
Ancillary Services	Big Four & Advisory	EY, PwC, KPMG, Nishith Desai Associates	Transfer Pricing Specialist Funds, Financial Services Tax Strategist, Legal Counsel Markets
Ancillary Services	Data & Administration	SS&C, Orbis	Fund Accounting Manager, Regulatory Reporting Analyst, Middle Office Operations Lead
Ancillary Services	Trustee & Corporate Services	Axis Trustee, Catalyst	Trustee Relationship Manager, Corporate Secretarial Specialist, Compliance Monitoring Officer
Finance Companies	Trade & Export Finance	360tf, India Exim Bank	Export Credit Analyst, Structured Trade Finance Lead, Working Capital Specialist
Finance Companies	Corporate & Infrastructure	AMNS India, REC, IREDA	Infrastructure Investment Analyst, Project Finance Structurer, Renewable Energy Finance Specialist
Insurance	Indian Leaders	GIC Re, LIC, HDFC Life, ICICI Lombard	Actuarial Pricing Analyst, Corporate Underwriting Specialist, Insurance Product Development Lead
Insurance	Global Reinsurers	Berkley Re, Peak Re	Catastrophe Modelling Analyst, Reinsurance Treaty Structurer, Capital Solvency Risk Analyst

So, the next time you start hunting for opportunities and preparing your work visas, remember, the Moon and stars look beautiful only because they are far and shine in the dark. India already has its Sun as a GIFT ready to rise, in a CITY that makes your career pretty and witty.

Sources

weforum.org
World Economic Forum, "How can countries attract the global workforce of the future?"
https://www.weforum.org/stories/2023/04/how-can-countries-attract-the-global-workforce-of-the-future/

sansad.in
Parliament of India, official parliamentary records and documents & Business standard news
https://www.business-standard.com/finance/news/as-many-as-409-firms- operating-from-ifsc-gift-city-fm-informs-parliament-125081800454_1.html

pib.gov.in.
Press Information Bureau (PIB), Government of India — Press Release (PRID 2195725)
https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2195725&reg=3&lang=1

ABOUT HARDIK PANDYA

Hardik Pandya is a Chartered Accountant from The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India, a CFA Charter- holder from CFA Institute, and holds a Bachelor of Commerce degree from University of Mumbai, with experience across asset & wealth management and corporate banking.

Hardik Pandya is currently associated with JPMorgan Chase & Co. within the Asset & Wealth Management division as an Investment Specialist, supporting international multi-asset investment platforms and client-focused investment communications across global investment strategies.

Previously, he was part of the Luxembourg Product Implementation team within the same Asset & Wealth Management business, where he worked on product implementation and client servicing initiatives. Prior to joining JPMorgan Chase & Co., Hardik was associated with Kotak Mahindra Bank as a Corporate Credit Monitoring Portfolio Manager, focusing on SME credit monitoring, portfolio oversight, collateral management, and risk analysis.

Hardik Pandya is an active volunteer with CFA Society India.

As a fun early-career experiment during his graduation years, he independently published two e-books on Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing – "Richness Redefined", a novella, and "How I Made Millions in 12 Hours and Lost Everything in 12 Seconds", a short story reflecting a phase of curiosity, experimentation, and exploring career paths through trial and error.

HARDIK PANDYA, CA, CFA
Member – Public Awareness Committee, CFA Society India

FUND STRUCTURES WITHOUT BORDERS: HOW IFSC ENABLES GLOBAL FEEDER & MASTER FUNDS

BY MIHIR SHIRGAONKAR, CFA

Vice President - Alternative Investments, Phillip Ventures IFSC Pvt. Ltd.

Member - Public Awareness Committee, CFA Society India

The Appetite and the Constraint | Introduction

Global investing is no longer a peripheral consideration for Indian families. In FY 2025-26, resident Indians remitted nearly $ 2.6 billion for investments in overseas equity and debt under the Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) of the Reserve Bank of India, marking the fourth consecutive financial year in which such remittances crossed the $ 1 billion mark. A portion of these global investment flows has been facilitated by Gift City. This increasing and consistent rise reflects the growing participation of Indian investors in structuring and channelizing international investment capital.

Historically, global investment capital originating from India often depended on fragmented domestic and offshore arrangements for pooling, custody, administration and deployment. Each of the offshore avenues usually comes with its own operational nuances spanning regulations, treasury management, and reporting. The GIFT City ecosystem began changing this when the International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) introduced the Fund Management Entity (FME) regime in 2022, which has now evolved into what we understand as the IFSCA (Fund Management) Regulations, 2025.

An International Gateway | IFSCA and Global Fund Management

The importance of GIFT City lies not merely in providing another location for financial activity, but in creating an India-linked jurisdiction designed as a gateway between Indian capital and global investments. The IFSCA functions as a unified regulator for financial products, financial services, and financial institutions in GIFT City. This unified architecture is particularly relevant for exploring global allocations, wherein product design, investor eligibility, permissible investments, custody, disclosures, and ongoing governance need to be aligned within a coherent framework. For global investing, this changes the traditional access framework.

Historically, Indian families seeking international diversification had to rely on fragmented routes such as direct overseas brokerage accounts, domestic mutual fund schemes investing abroad, or offshore structures established in other jurisdictions. Each route had its own constraints in terms of access, operational convenience, investment limits, reporting, custody, and portfolio oversight. The IFSCA framework provides a more organized pathway by allowing global investment fund-based products to be managed by Fund Management Entities under various structures. These structures span from funds (Alternative Investment Funds and Retail Schemes) to separately managed accounts (Portfolio Management Services). This enables global investing for mass affluent and high net worth investors, who can explore global allocations accessible through institutionalized avenues.

Global Architecture | Global Investment Structures in GIFT IFSC

The IFSCA (Fund Management) Regulations, 2025, allow global investing to be accessed through multiple structures, each serving a distinct investor need. At one end are global Alternative Investment Funds, typically structured for sophisticated investors seeking a large ticket-sized pooled exposure to international assets. These funds can be designed around global equities, fixed income, sectoral themes, or multi-asset strategies, subject to the applicable strategy elaborated in the pre-placement memoranda (PPMs) of the respective strategies. For investors who prefer professional management and collective participation in a defined strategy, a global AIF provides a structured alternative to maintaining individual overseas brokerage accounts.

At the more customized end is the curation of global portfolios under Portfolio Management Services, where a portfolio is managed separately for each client under an investment mandate. This format is particularly relevant for investors who require tailored allocations, direct portfolio-level visibility, flexibility in portfolio construction, and individual reporting. Unlike a pooled fund, a global PMS allows each portfolio to reflect specific investment objectives, risk appetite, liquidity needs, and restrictions of the respective investors.

Global AIFs can also operate through feeder structures. In a feeder-master arrangement, the feeder fund pools capital from a defined investor base and invests in a master fund or underlying scheme that manages the core portfolio and is domiciled in an offshore jurisdiction. In effect, the feeder structure can make an established global investment strategy accessible to eligible investors through the Gift City ecosystem, without requiring each investor to directly access the offshore fund or replicate the strategy independently. Thus, feeder structures allow different investor pools to access a common global strategy through a single investment engine.

The Channelization of Capital | Outbound Investments via Gift City

The emergence of the outbound investing ecosystem is already visible in the data. The most recent IFSCA Bulletin, as of March 31, 2026, suggests that fund management schemes in GIFT IFSC had deployed approximately \$ 1.62 billion into foreign jurisdictions, with non-retail schemes accounting for nearly \$ 1.59 billion of this amount. What is notable is the various categories of investors participating in global investing through the Gift City route.

Access to global fund structures in IFSC is not limited only to resident individuals investing under the LRS route. Under the Overseas Portfolio Investment framework of the RBI, resident Indian entities may also participate in IFSC-based global investment funds or vehicles, subject to permissible limits and restrictions under the OPI framework. Global investing through IFSC can, therefore, extend beyond individual remittances and become relevant for corporate treasuries, family-office entities, and other eligible Indian entities seeking regulated exposure to international investment strategies. In effect, the OPI route broadens the investor base for global fund structures in Gift City and allows participation in global investing through a defined regulatory channel.

Additionally, global investments via GIFT City can also be availed of by persons resident outside India. In other words, global investors can access global investments through structures set up in GIFT IFSC, only reinforcing the credibility which Gift City enjoys in the minds of NRI and foreign investors when it comes to global investing.

An Ecosystem of Choice | The Case for Global Investing

The recent geopolitical crisis in the Middle East has once again demonstrated how quickly global capital can move toward perceived safe-haven assets. The sharp weakening of the Indian rupee relative to the US dollar has reinforced the relevance of USD-based allocations for Indian investors seeking currency diversification, global asset exposure, and mitigation of single-country domestic market concentration risk. The growing appetite for USD-denominated investments needs an institutional channel that is regulated, accessible, and capable of supporting different investor profiles. This is where Gift City assumes significance as a global ecosystem of choice.

By enabling global AIFs, PMS mandates, and outbound feeder funds under the Fund Management framework of the IFSCA, Gift City can help convert the objective of global diversification into organized investment structures. In that sense, the IFSCA is not merely facilitating outbound investment. It is helping facilitate an India-linked architecture through which global capital allocation can become more structured, professionally managed, and institutionally scalable.

Building the Human Architecture | Skills for the Fund Ecosystem in GIFT City

As the fund-management ecosystem in Gift City expands, employers increasingly require professionals who can operate across functions rather than within narrow domestic-market silos. Investment roles require an understanding of global asset classes, portfolio construction, financial analysis and risk management, while product professionals must translate investment strategies into appropriate fund, feeder or separately managed structures. Equally important is familiarity with the IFSCA regulatory framework, cross-border capital flows, onboarding, custody, valuation, fund accounting, taxation and investor reporting. Proficiency in technology capabilities such as data analysis, automation and the ability to work with investment and reporting systems are becoming increasingly valuable as firms build scalable fund management businesses. FMEs look for stakeholder-management and problem-solving abilities, because GIFT City products frequently involve coordination among investment teams, regulators, custodians, administrators, banks, distributors and overseas counterparties. The most relevant professionals will therefore combine domain expertise with regulatory awareness, operational understanding and the ability to function within a global institutional environment.

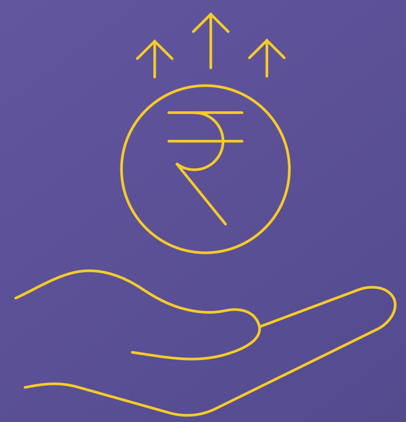
ABOUT MIHIR SHIRGAONKAR

Mihir Shirgaonkar, CFA heads the Alternative Investments division at Phillip Ventures IFSC Pvt. Ltd. and has been a part of the firm since 2021. He is a chartered accountant and has completed MBA-PGPX at the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad. He has over 11 years of asset management experience and has worked with DSP Investment Managers (erstwhile DSP BlackRock) and HDFC AMC in his previous roles. In his current role, Mihir manages global and India-focused strategies, blending deep fundamental analysis with proprietary data-driven intelligence to capture structural growth trends across geographies, sectors, and businesses. In his career so far, he has handled multiple areas that span portfolio management, market making, valuations, fund administration, and project management. His other interests include philosophy, reading, photography, trekking, coding, cooking, and travelling.

MIHIR SHIRGAONKAR, CFA

Vice President – Alternative Investments, Phillip Ventures IFSC Pvt. Ltd

Member of the Public Awareness Committee (PAC)



INDIA'S FINANCIAL FRONTIER: WHAT GIFT CITY MEANS FOR THE RETAIL INVESTOR

India accounts for roughly 4-5% of global market capitalization. An investor whose entire portfolio is domestic is, by definition, underexposed to 95% of global opportunity. For years, the Indian retail investor trying to own a piece of Apple or the S&P ran into the same wall. The simplest route, i.e., investing in international mutual funds, has a regulatory block that restricts fresh inflows into many schemes due to strict limits on overseas investments imposed by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

A solution has been taking shape since 2020, when the International Financial Services Centre Authority (IFSCA) was formally established, giving GIFT City - Gujarat International Finance Tec-City - a unified regulatory framework and the infrastructure to function as a genuine international financial hub.

Long associated with institutional players, global banks, and high-net-worth investors, GIFT City is now opening its doors meaningfully to retail participants. The core attraction for retail investors comes down to three things GIFT City offers: accessibility, products, and taxes.

BY SHIVANI CHOPRA, CFA
Vice President – Truemind Capital

Accessibility

An IFSC-domiciled mutual fund can deploy capital internationally without being subject to the $ 1 billion per AMC limit or the $ 7 billion aggregate industry limit. Resident Indians must use the Reserve Bank of India's Liberalized Remittance Scheme (LRS), which caps outward remittances at $ 250,000 per person per financial year.

Getting acquainted with the LRS process first and know-how of opening accounts to buy IFSC mutual funds is strongly recommended.

Outbound funds give resident Indians access to global markets through regulated Indian fund management entities in GIFT City. Before this, the only equivalent was domestic international fund-of-funds, and those ran into the industry-wide RBI cap.

GIFT City outbound funds are not subject to the same constraints, which is why they have attracted attention from both fund houses and investors who have been shut out of domestic international schemes recently.

Products

This is where things have shifted most meaningfully for retail investors. Until recently, GIFT City was primarily the domain of Alternative Investment Funds and Portfolio Management Services, both of which carry minimum investments that place them firmly in HNI territory. That threshold remains, but a parallel set of retail-accessible structures is now available alongside it.

The retail entry point, with funds having a minimum ticket size of $ 5,000 (and additional $ 500 top-ups), puts systematic investing within reach for a broader set of investors than was possible a year ago. Here is what the landscape looks like today for retail investors

*** GIFT City Outbound Retail Funds:**
Accessible to resident Indians via LRS; minimum investment - $ 5,000

AMC Name	Asset Class	Scheme Name	Underlying Rationale
DSP Mutual Fund	Equity	DSP Global Equity Fund	Active exposure to global equities across US, Europe, Japan, and China
PPFAS Mutual Fund	Equity	PPFAS Nasdaq 100 Fund	Tracks tech-heavy US index via UCITS/ETFs
PPFAS Mutual Fund	Equity	PPFAS S&P 500 Fund	Diversified US large- cap exposure via UCITS/ETFs
Edelweiss MF	Equity	Edelweiss Greater China Fund	Targeted exposure to China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong equities

(Subsequent top-ups for DSP and PPFAS funds are available from $ 500)

How should investors choose the right international mutual funds

Before investing in international mutual funds, investors should evaluate a few key factors:

- Their overall risk appetite, personal financial goals and investment time horizon
- The credibility and long-term performance record of the fund house
- The geography, sector, or theme the fund focuses on
- Costs involved, including expense ratios and any underlying fund fees
- Most importantly, how the international allocation complements and diversifies the existing portfolio

What is the ideal investment horizon for international mutual funds

Since international mutual funds are largely equity-oriented, investors should ideally have a long-term perspective. Staying invested for at least 5 years or more allows them to benefit from global economic growth cycles, and the diversification advantages these funds can provide.

Taxation

On the tax front, the IFSC framework is structured differently from domestic investing. GIFT City funds pay tax at the fund level, not the investor level.

For holdings beyond two years, the long-term capital gains rate with surcharge and cess comes to 14.95%. Positions sold within two years are taxed at up to 42.7% (maximum marginal rate). This steep rate is why fund managers at GIFT City tend to minimise turnover in the first two years. Securities Transaction Tax, Commodities Transaction Tax, and stamp duty don't apply to IFSC exchange transactions.

Investors can consult a Chartered Accountant or financial advisor for a personalized view and understanding of tax treatment especially with respect to Schedule FA (foreign assets) reporting and other matters such as TCS.

What are the caveats

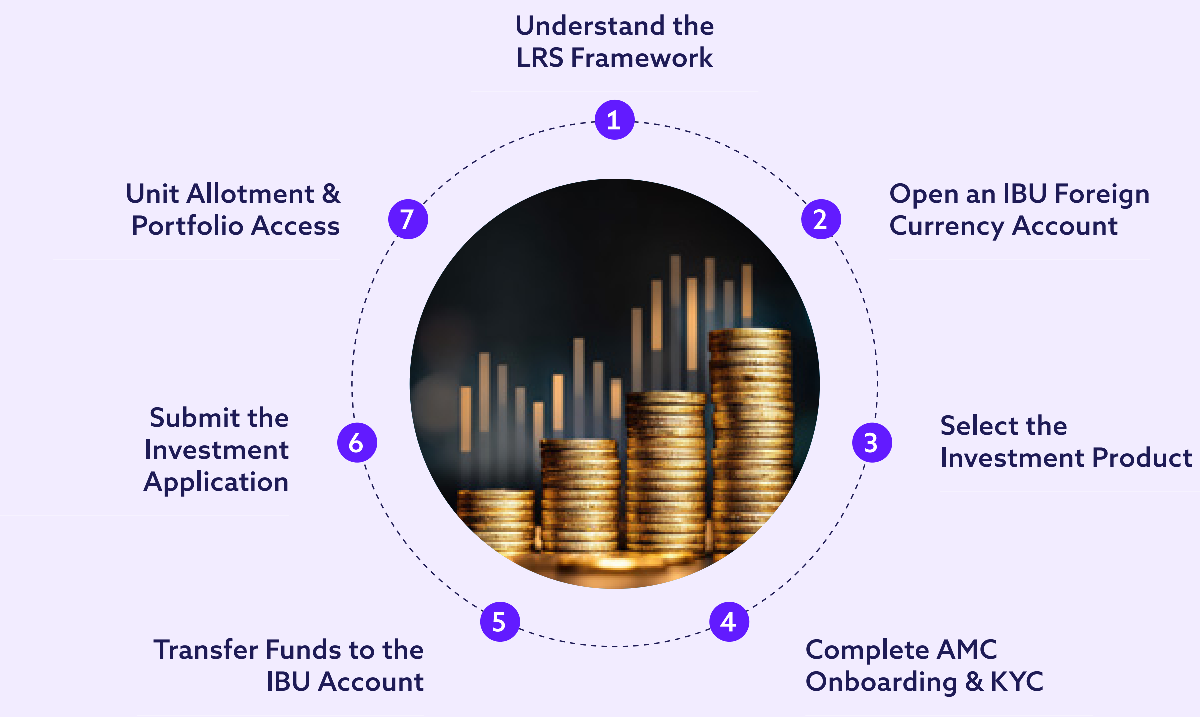
The opportunity is genuine, but so are the constraints. Retail investors should weigh both sides carefully before investing.

For instance, the LRS ceiling of $ 250,000 per financial year per individual applies to all overseas uses, including travel, education, and investments combined. For residents, this is a shared pool, not an exclusive investment budget.

The onboarding experience and online account accessibility for IFSC mutual funds are improving gradually, but the process is still not completely seamless. A key challenge remains the absence of a unified transaction platform similar to domestic ecosystems such as BSE Star or NSE MF, which currently make investing in domestic mutual funds far more streamlined and convenient.

The ecosystem may be at a nascent stage, but the value of GIFT City should be best understood as a structured, regulated, India-anchored route to global diversification that is, for the first time, becoming accessible below the HNI threshold.

Quick Steps to Invest in IFSC GIFT City Mutual Funds



1. **Understand the LRS Framework**
   Familiarize yourself with the Liberalized Remittance Scheme (LRS), which allows Indian residents to remit funds overseas within prescribed limits for global investments.
2. **Open an IBU Foreign Currency Account**
   Open a foreign currency account with an IFSC Banking Unit (IBU) located in GIFT City to facilitate investments in global products. Not all AMCs require this.
3. **Select the Investment Product**
   Evaluate and choose the appropriate IFSC-based mutual fund based on your risk profile and financial goals.
4. **Complete AMC Onboarding & KYC**
   Register with the Asset Management Company (AMC) or empaneled advisor/ distributor and complete KYC formalities
5. **Transfer Funds to the IBU Account**
   Remit funds under LRS from your domestic bank account into the foreign currency account maintained with the IBU.
6. **Submit the Investment Application**
   Place the transaction request with the AMC or distribution platform for the selected mutual fund scheme.
7. **Unit Allotment & Portfolio Access**
   Once processed, units are allotted to the investor and can be tracked through the AMC or platform portal.

ABOUT SHIVANI CHOPRA

Shivani Chopra, CFA, is a finance professional with over 15 years of diverse experience across investment management, private equity, and academia.

She currently serves as a Vice President at Truemind Capital, a SEBI-registered, fee-only private wealth management firm known for its research-driven and client centric advisory approach. Over the course of her career, she has worked at the intersection of investments and financial strategy, bringing analytical depth and practical insight to high-net-worth client portfolios.

Shivani's academic foundation includes the CFA Charter (CFA Institute, USA), CFA (ICFAI), MA in Economics, and the CFVM certification from Wall Street Prep, USA. Shivani is deeply passionate about financial education and has served as visiting faculty at several leading B-schools across India, where she teaches courses in investments, valuation, and applied finance. She is also a long-standing and active volunteer with CFA Society India, currently serving as Co-Chair of the Public Awareness Committee (PAC).

SHIVANI CHOPRA, CFA
Vice President – Truemind Capital

GIFT CITY: AN EMERGING DESTINATION FOR GREEN FINANCE

India's ambition to become a sustainable, green economy is not only a moral responsibility but also a matter of pure economic logic. As the country grapples with the energy crisis stemming from its reliance on imported fossil fuels, the transition to a green economy will help reduce reliance on fossil fuels from politically volatile regions. However, the transition to a green economy and clean energy to meet energy needs requires massive capital mobilisation. While domestic financial sources are essential to fund this transition, they are not sufficient to finance India's green plans; mobilising foreign capital becomes essential. India's Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT), a financial centre akin to those of Singapore and Hong Kong, will play a crucial role in helping the country mobilise foreign capital. The financial centre has already taken several policy measures to establish itself as a global hub for green finance.

BY LABANYA PRAKASH JENA, CFA

Director - Climate and Sustainability Initiative (CSI)
Member – Public Awareness Committee, CFA Society India

An ecosystem for green finance

The success of green finance hinges on a robust ecosystem that addresses investors' concerns about greenwashing and ensures smooth trading and settlement of securities. The GIFT City has established regulatory guidelines and a framework for ESG rating and ESG rating agencies. The regulatory framework can ensure that reliable data, standardised methodologies, and governance norms back rating. A robust regulatory standard and framework can mitigate greenwashing risks often associated with green finance products. In addition, GIFT City made it mandatory for issuers of ESG-labelled debt securities, such as green bonds and sustainability bonds, to comply with international standards and principles for the issuance of green securities. All these initiatives will strengthen investor confidence in the utilisation of green finance.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) scheme named "Scheme for Trading and Settlement of Sovereign Green Bonds in the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC)" has enabled non-resident Indians to directly trade Sovereign Government Securities (SGrBs) on the IFSC platform. Wider investor participation will improve the liquidity of SGrBs.

Financial instruments for green transition

Over the last few years, GIFT City has developed financial instruments (e.g., green bonds) that enable domestic companies to raise capital at competitive rates for green projects. First, it has developed a framework for sustainable-related financial instruments through its listing regulations, enabling the issuance and trading of green and sustainable bonds within the IFSC ecosystem. The framework of these financial instruments is also aligned with global standards. The introduction of transition bonds enables companies in carbon-intensive sectors to access finance for decarbonisation. Further, the proposed blended finance framework seeks to mobilise private capital by combining it with concessional capital, thereby reducing private investors' risks and attracting large-scale private capital for green sectors. Development of this regulatory standard and framework will not only enable foreign investors to invest through a publicly traded financial instrument but also help them meet their respective sustainable regulatory requirements.

Indication for subsequent action

The GIFT City is aware that the steps taken by the centre are not sufficient to attract green capital. Hence, the centre has set up an expert committee on green and climate finance that advises following global best practices and standards on sustainable finance. All these initiatives signal the continuity of momentum on sustainable finance at the centre.

The impact of these measures is reflected in the massive volume of ESG-labelled debt issuance listed on IFSC exchanges, which has crossed $16 billion. This momentum underscores the effectiveness of a coordinated regulatory and market-building approach.

Way forward for the GIFT City

Although the financial centre has several measures to attract green capital, the Centre can also take additional measures, as outlined below.

- GIFT City can facilitate the development of a dedicated lending platform for green/ sustainable projects in the MSME sector. The platform can provide MSMEs with an opportunity to avail of finance for green projects through GIFT City.
- GIFT City can facilitate the creation of a de-risking facility to promote sustainable finance in India. In addition, the GIFT City can create an enabling regulatory framework for MDBs to offer risk-mitigating financial solutions, such as partial credit guarantee, blended financing, and currency swap options. Besides, GIFT City could coordinate with counterparts in Asian countries to implement blended finance structures/de-risking mechanisms.
- GIFT City can facilitate the development of alternative green finance assets (Green REITs/InvITs/ ETFs) and facilitate listing on stock exchanges to attract private capital, particularly small and illiquid assets.
- GIFT City can mandate reporting and disclosure on sustainability and climate change in a phased manner, following global standards, such as IFRS S1 and IFRS S2. These disclosures may initially be voluntary, paving the way for mandatory disclosures.

Opportunities for professionals

GIFT City is emerging not just as a platform for raising green capital but as a significant hub for finance professionals. As companies increasingly tap GIFT to issue green bonds, sustainability-linked instruments, and ESG-focused funds, there is rising demand for expertise in structuring, certification, risk assessment, and compliance with global green finance standards. All these will create several opportunities for finance professionals in investment banking, ESG rating and certification, and climate risk management domains. For example, finance professionals can design innovative and bespoke financial products—such as blended finance vehicles or transition bonds—tailored to both investor expectations and issuer needs.

The GIFT City is on the path to becoming a sustainable finance hub through the development of a regulatory innovation and robust market infrastructure and following global best practices on climate change and sustainability disclosures. The Financial Centre is playing a crucial role in mobilising a massive volume of capital to fund India's energy transition. For finance professionals, it is an opportunity to structure financial products and help India's green companies raise capital from global investors.

ABOUT LABANYA JENA

Labanya has over 20 years in financial services, green finance, and international development. He is a Director at Climate and Sustainability Initiative (CSI). Additionally, he serves as a Visiting Senior Fellow at London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). He previously worked with Council on Energy, Environment, and Water (CEEW), Climate Policy Initiative, Commonwealth Secretariat, UNDP, World Resources Institute, and Asian Development Bank (ADB).

Labanya is an avid writer on climate and green finance. He co-authored a book, "Net-Zero Trio: Synchronizing Technology, Business, and Policy for Green Transition," published by Bloomsbury.

LABANYA PRAKASH JENA, CFA
Director - Climate and Sustainability Initiative (CSI)

THE INTERNATIONAL BULLION EXCHANGE: BRINGING OFFSHORE GOLD MARKETS ONSHORE

From Price Taker to Price Participant — India's Structural Shift in Bullion Markets

BY KRISHNA TIBREWALA, CA, CFA

Associate Vice President – Investment Banking, Big Four Member – Public Awareness Committee, CFA Society India

Introduction

India is one of the largest consumers of gold globally. Gold is embedded in industrial use, household savings, jewellery demand, use by central bank, and increasingly, in portfolio allocation strategies. However, global gold prices continue to be determined primarily in international markets.

The benchmark price for gold is discovered thousands of miles away primarily through the Over the Counter (OTC) market coordinated by the London Bullion Market Association (LBMA) and the futures market operated by CME Group in New York (COMEX). Gold imported into India is priced offshore, denominated in US dollars, and embedded within a pricing ecosystem in which India has traditionally been a passive participant.

This structural imbalance, being one of the world's largest buyers yet a peripheral player in price discovery has long been a defining feature of India's bullion market. The establishment of the India International Bullion Exchange (IIBX) within the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) at GIFT City marks a deliberate attempt to change that equation.

IIBX seeks to transition India from the world's largest consumer of offshore-priced gold to a structural participant in the global bullion pricing ecosystem.

Offshore Price Discovery: Why India Was Peripheral

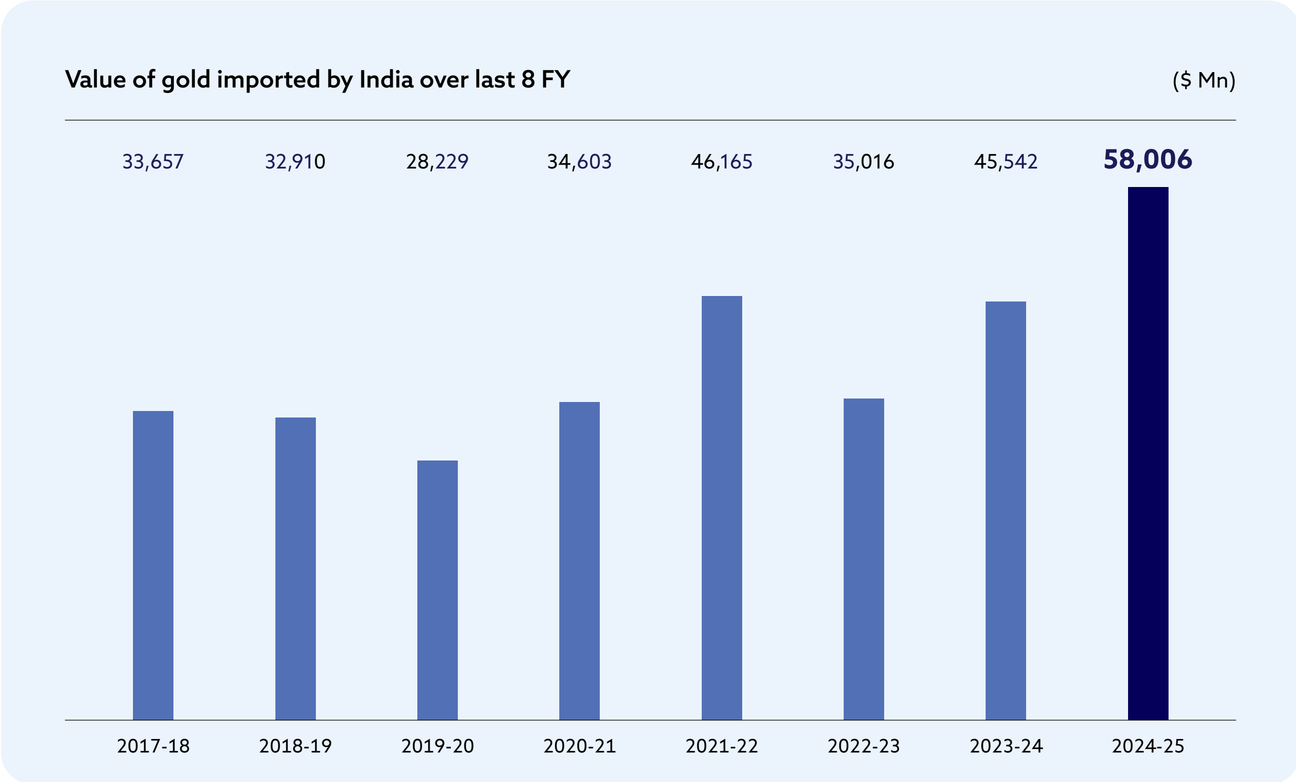
To understand the significance of IIBX, it is important to understand how global gold pricing works.

The LBMA operates an OTC market where major bullion banks such as Deutsche Bank, JP Morgan, etc. transact large spot and forward positions. Separately, COMEX futures contracts provide a deep and liquid derivatives venue that shapes expectations about future prices. Together, these two centres form the backbone of global gold price discovery.

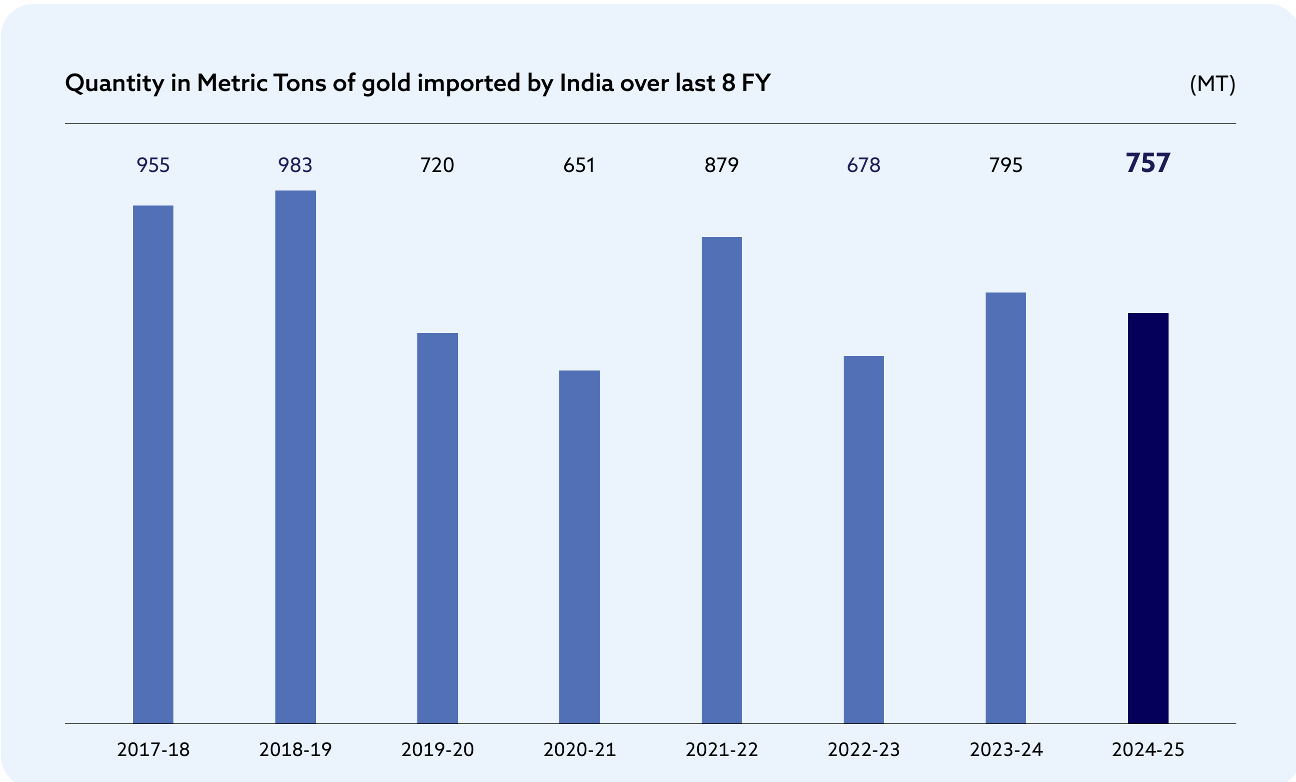
Despite accounting for a substantial share of physical demand, India historically remained outside this architecture for several reasons:

- Capital account restrictions limited free international participation
- The domestic bullion market was fragmented and largely informal
- There was no internationally recognized vaulting, clearing, and settlement ecosystem
- Imports were routed through nominated banks rather than a transparent exchange platform
- Absence of a deep derivatives market for bullion

As a result, India imported gold at globally discovered prices rather than influencing them. Indian jewellers and investors were effectively price takers, exposed not only to gold price volatility but also to dollar exchange rate risk.



Source: GOI - Ministry of Commerce and Industry – Tradestat data bank



Source: GOI - Ministry of Commerce and Industry – Tradestat data bank

IIBX: The Institutional Mechanism

Within the ecosystem of GIFT City, IIBX operates as a multi-segment platform to institutionalize bullion trading and facilitate transparent, globally aligned imports into India.

The exchange enables trading in both spot (physical) and derivatives contracts in gold and silver, integrating physical bullion markets with financial trading infrastructure.

In the spot market, bullion is traded in the form of Bullion Depository Receipts (BDRs) — electronic instruments representing ownership of physical bullion stored in internationally compliant vaults located within the IFSC. These vaults are approved by the International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) and linked to the depository infrastructure operated by India International Depository IFSC Limited.

Market participants hold BDRs in dematerialized form through depository accounts, enabling efficient settlement and transfer of bullion ownership within the exchange ecosystem.

Alongside physical trading, the exchange also lists derivatives contracts for gold & silver, allowing market participants to hedge price risk and take positions on future bullion prices.

The coexistence of physical and derivatives markets within the same ecosystem mirrors the structure seen in mature global commodity markets.

With this, now for the first time, Indian resident jewellers meeting regulatory eligibility criteria — designated as Qualified Jewellers (QJs) — are permitted to import bullion directly through the exchange either as members or as clients of trading members. This replaces the earlier system where gold imports were primarily routed through nominated banks and bilateral supplier arrangements.

Trading on the exchange occurs through a centralized electronic order book, where buy and sell orders are matched automatically and anonymously, like global commodity exchanges.

> ***The creation of IIBX within the IFSC framework is not merely a trade facilitation reform. It is an institutional assertion that India's scale of demand justifies a seat at the table of global price discovery***

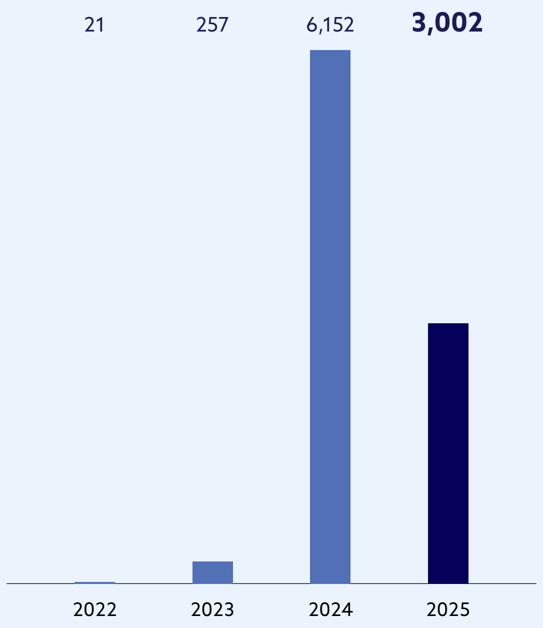
This architecture enables several structural improvements in India's bullion market:

- **Transparency in Import Pricing:** Bullion imports routed through IIBX occur via a transparent electronic trading platform rather than opaque bilateral transactions between banks and suppliers
- **Integrated Market Infrastructure:** Trading, clearing, vaulting, and depository services are linked through a unified ecosystem within the IFSC
- **Global Market Participation:** Entities such as foreign bullion suppliers, international participants, and IFSC banking units can participate on the exchange subject to regulatory approval
- **Responsible Supply Chain Compliance:** Bullion traded on IIBX must adhere to OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals, ensuring integrity and traceability in sourcing.

Although still in an early stage of development, this institutional framework is designed not merely to streamline bullion imports but to integrate India more closely with global bullion markets. By combining physical delivery mechanisms, electronic trading infrastructure, and international regulatory standards within the IFSC jurisdiction, IIBX creates the foundational architecture required for India to gradually participate in global bullion price discovery.

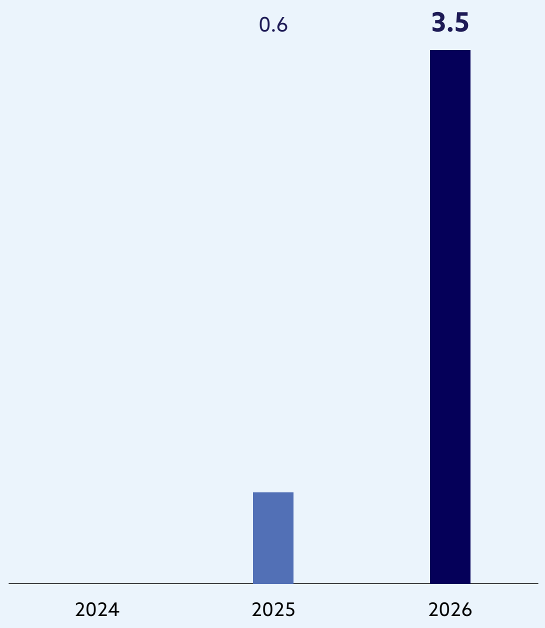
Value of turnover for SPOT transactions (Gold & Silver) on IIBX

($ Mn)



Value of turnover for derivative transactions (Gold & Silver Futures) on IIBX)

($ Mn)



Source: IIBX website
Note: 2026 data is up to 13th March 2026

The below process snapshots help understand the process followed at IIBX:

SELLERS

Bullion Dealers/Banks → Deposit Bullion at IFSC Vaults and Demat process → Generation of Bullion Depository Receipt (BDR) → Place Sell Order on IIBX Trading System

BUYERS

Qualified Jewellers → AD letter by IIBX for USD remittance by QJ → INR to USD and receipt of USD in IIBX Clearing → Place Buy Order on IIBX Trading System

Buy and Sell Order Matches → IIBX - Clearing → Transfer of BDR to Buyer Demat Account by IIDI → Extinguishment of Bullion Depository Receipts →

→ Filing of Bill of Entry → Customs Clearance → Remat of BDR into Physical Bullion at → Door Delivery across India within 24 Hours

Source: IIBX website

From Consumption Hub to Price Discovery Node

Price discovery does not occur by decree. It emerges from liquidity, two-sided participation, arbitrage linkages, and institutional credibility.

For India to transition from price taker to price participant, several conditions must be satisfied:

Deep Liquidity

Sustained participation from domestic jewellers, international bullion banks, refiners, and institutional investors is essential

Arbitrage Connectivity

Prices on IIBX must be continuously arbitraged against London spot prices and COMEX futures. When price differentials arise, traders must be able to efficiently exploit them, linking IIBX into the global pricing matrix

Regulatory Credibility

Global market participants require confidence in clearing, settlement, vaulting standards, and dispute resolution frameworks

Currency Framework

Dollar-denominated trading within the IFSC aligns IIBX with global bullion conventions, reducing currency friction and facilitating integration

As these conditions mature, IIBX will not replace London or New York — but it will become a recognized pricing node within a multi-centre network. IIBX will occupy a different space in the global bullion trading world:

- A physical exchange anchored in emerging market demand
- A bridge between Asian consumption and global capital
- A dollar-denominated offshore market within Indian jurisdiction

In effect, India's massive physical demand historically reflected only in import statistics will begin to influence live trading prices within a globally recognized venue.

Conclusion

If successful, the long-term outcome is not that India dictates global gold prices. Rather, it is that India becomes an active contributor to them.

Today, gold imported into India reflects prices discovered offshore. Tomorrow, offshore markets may incorporate liquidity signals originating from within the IFSC.

> *The significance of IIBX lies not in its current scale, but in its structural design. The necessary architecture spanning trading, clearing, vaulting, and international participation is now in place.*

ABOUT KRISHNA TIBREWALA

Krishna Tibrewala is a finance professional with over seven years of experience across investment banking, transaction advisory, financial analysis, and taxation. He currently works as an Associate Vice President with the Investment Banking team at a Big Four firm, where he is involved in executing M&A transactions.

Krishna has advised clients across a diverse set of sectors, including financial services, technology, shipping & logistics, non-profits, circular economy, and sports & entertainment.

He is an active member of the Public Awareness Committee (PAC) at CFA Society India.

Krishna is a Chartered Accountant and a CFA Charterholder.

KRISHNA TIBREWALA, CA, CFA

Associate Vice President – Investment Banking, Big Four Firm
Member – Public Awareness Committee, CFA Society India

EDITORIAL TEAM

SANDEEP GUPTA, CFA, CIPM
Director, CFA Society India

SHIVANI CHOPRA, CFA
Co-chair, Public Awareness Committee

LABANYA PRAKASH JENA, CFA
Member, Public Awareness Committee

SIDDHARTH JAIN, CFA
Member, Public Awareness Committee

SHIVANI SUVARNA, CFA
Member, Public Awareness Committee

HARDIK PANDYA, CA, CFA
Member, Public Awareness Committee

SANDEEP JAIN, CFA
Member, Public Awareness Committee

CFA Society India

Concept and design at PageKraft.in