Crucible

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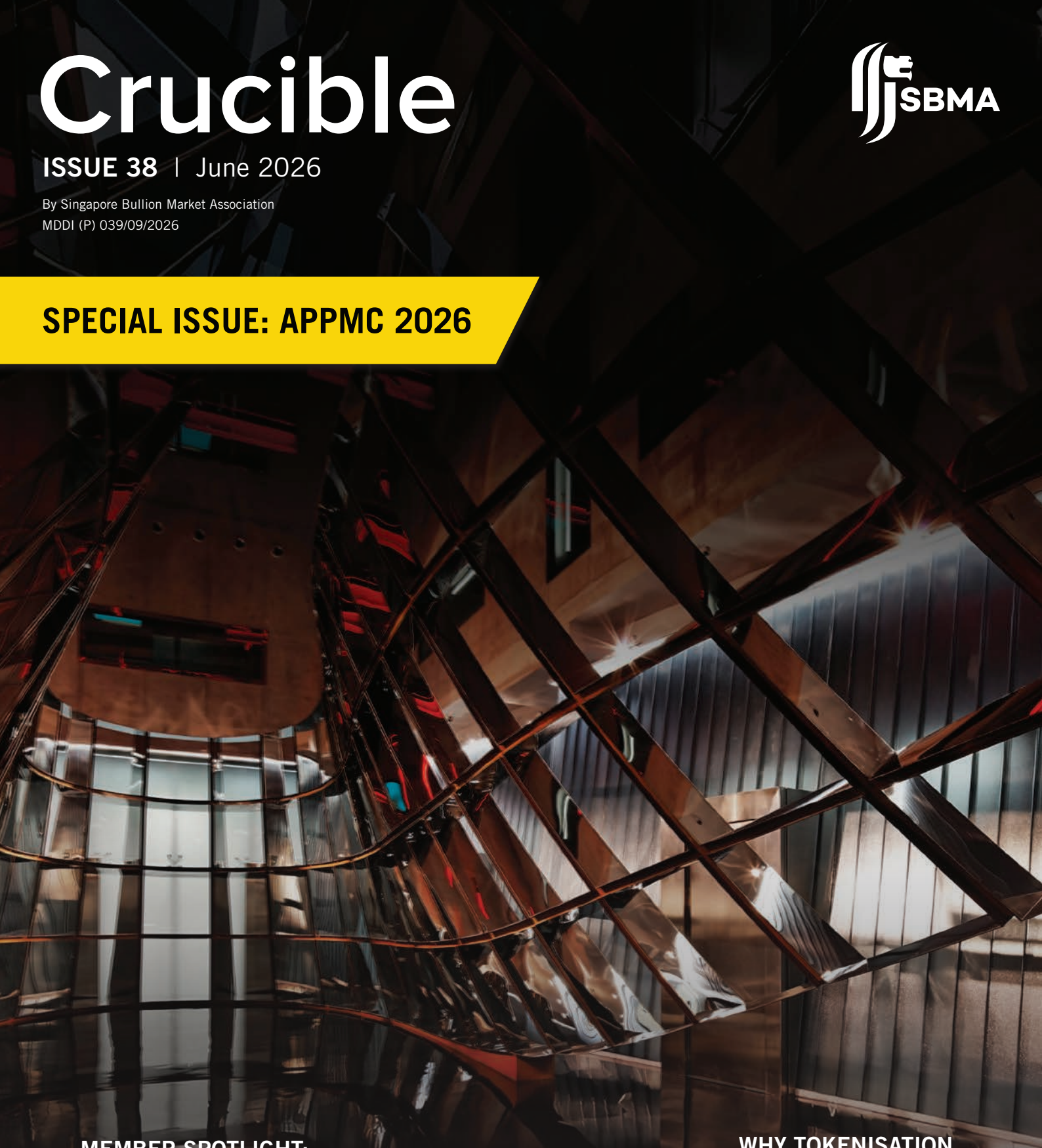

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: THE SINGAPORE MINT'S ROLE IN A RISING GOLD ECOSYSTEM
page 9-10

DIGITAL GOLD IN SOUTHEAST ASIA
page 14-15

WHY TOKENISATION MATTERS FOR THE BULLION INDUSTRY AND HOW CARRYING COSTS FIT IN
page 23-24

IMAGE OF LE FREEPORT

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PROJECT LION 1: LAYING THE FOUNDATION (2012-2024)

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2017-2024
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PROJECT LION 2: THE NEX STEPS (2025 AND BEYOND)

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3. A SHARED VISION WITH MAS AND INDUSTRY PARTNERS

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4. OUR DEVELOPMENT DIRECTIONS

MARKET INFRASTRUCTURE

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6. THE ENDGAME

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Read the press release

LE FREEPORT SINGAPORE: SUPPORTING SECURE STORAGE IN THE GLOBAL BULLION ECOSYSTEM

“SITUATED DIRECTLY ADJACENT TO THE AIRPORT, LE FREEPORT ALLOWS HIGH-VALUE ASSETS TO BE TRANSFERRED SECURELY WITHOUT RELYING ON LONG-DISTANCE PUBLIC ROAD TRANSPORT. OFTEN REFERRED TO AS “ASIA’S FORT KNOX,” THE 30,000-SQUARE-METRE FACILITY PROVIDES FULLY INSURED, BONDED STORAGE THAT OPERATES OUTSIDE THE JURISDICTION OF THE GLOBAL BANKING SYSTEM. ITS CAPABILITIES EXTEND BEYOND BULLION: THE CLIMATE-CONTROLLED VAULTS WERE ORIGINALLY BUILT FOR FINE ART AND ROUTINELY STORE LUXURY CARS, FINE WINE, AND JEWELLERY.

In certain versions of Crucible Issue 38, the following article previously featured incorrect market statements. For more information, please see: https://sbma.org.sg/news/clarification-and-apology-crucible-issue-38/.

Geopolitical volatility, persistent inflation, and evolving monetary policies continue to reinforce physical gold’s role as a key asset for diversification and wealth preservation. These dynamics have gained fresh regulatory and market focus with the March 2026 announcement by the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) and the Singapore Bullion Market Association (SBMA) outlining a strategic blueprint to position Singapore as a leading Asia-Pacific gold trading centre. Central to the initiative are plans to establish internationally aligned standards for bullion storage and logistics, alongside offering official vaulting services to foreign central banks – developments that directly elevate the importance of secure, well-regulated storage infrastructure. As demand for physical gold and trusted custody persists, high-security storage facilities, though less visible than trading or refining, remain a critical and foundational component of the global precious metals ecosystem.

Within this context, Le Freeport contributes to Singapore’s broader ecosystem for the storage and movement of high-value assets. Located adjacent to Changi Airport, the facility is designed to support the efficient handling of goods in transit. Assets stored within the approved licensed facility zone are not subject to import duties or Goods and Services Tax (GST), offering flexibility for international market participants.

Situated directly adjacent to the airport, Le Freeport allows high-value assets to be transferred securely without relying on long-distance public road transport. Often referred to as “Asia’s Fort Knox,” the 30,000-square-metre facility provides fully insured, bonded storage that operates outside the jurisdiction of the global banking system. Its capabilities extend beyond bullion: the climate-controlled vaults were originally built for fine art and routinely store luxury cars, fine wine, and jewellery.

THE IMPORTANCE OF STORAGE IN THE BULLION VALUE CHAIN

The bullion market relies on a network of interconnected functions, including refining, trading, logistics, and storage. While trading activity often draws the most attention, the ability to securely store physical metal strengthens confidence in the market as a whole.

For long-term investors, secure storage provides safekeeping in stable jurisdictions. For active market participants, it enables efficient inventory management and settlement. In both cases, the availability of secure and accessible storage supports liquidity and overall market integrity.

Neutral infrastructure facilities such as Le Freeport illustrate how these needs can be met by providing a secure environment that allows market participants to store bullion close to major transportation hubs while maintaining operational efficiency.

SECURE INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

The storage of high-value assets requires more than physical security; it depends on specialised expertise in handling, transport, and compliance. Within Le Freeport, this is

> CRUCIALLY, THIS CONCENTRATION MEANS INSTITUTIONAL CLIENTS CAN EXECUTE INTERNAL TRANSFERS OF OWNERSHIP BETWEEN DIFFERENT CUSTODIANS WITHOUT THE ASSETS EVER PHYSICALLY LEAVING THE HIGH-SECURITY ZONE, REDUCING TRANSIT RISKS AND INSURANCE COSTS CONSIDERABLY.

delivered through independent service providers that operate dedicated vaults and manage storage on behalf of their clients.

These providers include globally recognised vaulting and logistics firms with experience in handling precious metals and other high-value assets. Notably, Brink's, Loomis and Malca-Amit all operate within the facility. Their co-location offers market participants flexibility in selecting service providers while supporting chain-of-custody integrity and minimising the need to move assets between sites.

Crucially, this concentration means institutional clients can execute internal transfers of ownership between different custodians without the assets ever physically leaving the high-security zone, reducing transit risks and insurance costs considerably. This model reflects a broader trend within the bullion market towards integrated infrastructure, where storage, logistics, and handling capabilities are closely aligned.

SINGAPORE AS A STORAGE AND TRADING HUB

Singapore has established itself as a key centre for precious metals in Asia, supported by a combination of policy, infrastructure, and connectivity. The removal of GST on investment-grade precious metals in 2012, along with a stable regulatory environment, has contributed to sustained growth in the local bullion market.

Companies have invested in developing storage capacity to support physical holdings, and high-security vaulting facilities form an important part of this ecosystem. Their proximity to major air freight routes enhances Singapore's role as a regional and global distribution point for bullion.

Singapore's infrastructure is designed for large-scale operations, and facilities such as Le Freeport maintain meaningful operational headroom, allowing them to accommodate additional inflows – including potential allocations from foreign central banks – without strain.

Looking ahead, evolving market requirements, particularly the need for more efficient use of basement vaulting space, are shaping future development. A new facility is under consideration, designed with higher loading efficiency to optimise space utilisation and support more competitive pricing. More broadly, Singapore's precious metals ecosystem incorporates multiple layers of redundancy, strengthening its ability to respond effectively to periods of elevated demand.

As a result, Singapore is often considered alongside established hubs such as London, Zurich, and Hong Kong in discussions on global gold storage.

SUPPORTING FRAMEWORK AND OPERATIONAL STRUCTURE

A defining feature of Singapore's bullion ecosystem is its regulatory clarity. The storage and movement of precious metals are subject to oversight, particularly in areas such as anti-money laundering (AML) and counter-terrorism financing (CTF).

Within facilities such as Le Freeport, licensed service providers are responsible for import and export procedures as well as client due diligence, including Know Your Customer (KYC) requirements. This ensures that regulatory obligations are met at the operational level.

At the same time, infrastructure providers play a more limited role. Le Freeport, for example, provides the physical environment but does not take custody of goods or engage in trading activities. This separation of responsibilities helps maintain transparency and accountability, while allowing specialised firms to focus on their respective functions.

CHANGING DYNAMICS IN PHYSICAL GOLD STORAGE

Several trends have influenced demand for bullion storage in recent years, including increased focus on jurisdictional diversification, supply chain resilience, and a growing preference for direct ownership of physical assets.

Singapore has benefited from these developments, given its reputation for political stability, strong rule of law, and established financial infrastructure. Market participants increasingly treat storage location as a strategic consideration, rather than a purely operational one.

The presence of secure, well-regulated facilities supports this shift by providing confidence in both the safety and accessibility of stored assets.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Although often operating behind the scenes, storage infrastructure plays a fundamental role in the functioning of the global bullion market. By enabling the secure holding and efficient movement of physical metal, it supports a wide range of market activities, from long-term investment to active trading.

Facilities such as Le Freeport illustrate how infrastructure, service providers, and regulatory frameworks work together to support this ecosystem. For SBMA members and the wider market, understanding these dynamics provides useful insight into how the physical gold market operates in practice.

These materials are provided for general informational purposes only and do not constitute investment advice, financial advice, or a recommendation to buy, sell, or hold any financial products.

This article is brought to you by SBMA in association with Le Freeport Singapore.

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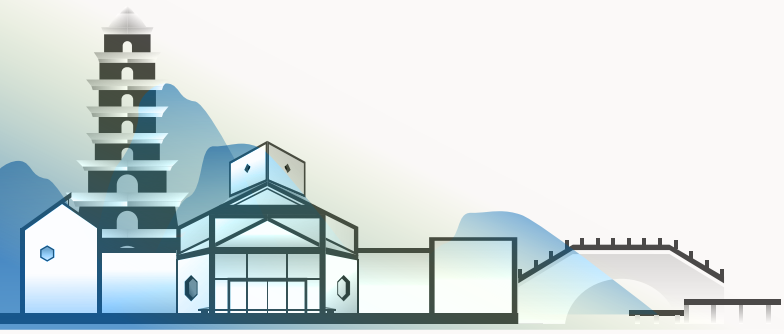

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THE GOLD PRINCIPLES: BUILDING RESPONSIBLE PROGRESS ACROSS THE GOLD VALUE CHAIN

By **ALBERT CHENG**, *Chair, Gold Principles Group; CEO, Singapore Bullion Market Association*

We live in an age of uncertainty. Geopolitical tensions, economic pressures, social expectations, and climate-related concerns are all reshaping the environment in which industries operate. Yet in the middle of that uncertainty, one point is becoming clearer, not less certain: responsible business conduct is no longer optional. It is part of the licence to operate, and increasingly, part of the licence to lead.

For the gold sector, this presents both a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge is that many of the issues we face today, from responsible sourcing and human rights to climate change and inclusion, are too large and too interconnected for any one company or segment of the market to address on its own. The opportunity is that gold, as a global industry with deep traditions and broad reach, is well placed to respond through collective effort.

This frames the thinking behind the Gold Industry Declaration of Responsibility and Sustainability Principles, better known as the Gold Principles. The Gold Principles are a shared commitment by the global gold sector to operate in a responsible and sustainable way, guided by ten common Principles that apply across the value chain, from mine to market. They were launched in 2022 by 14 founding Signatories, including SBMA, and these Signatories now work together through the Gold Principles Group.

The Gold Principles cover a wide range of sustainability topics that are highly relevant to our industry. These include responsible sourcing, support for the UN Sustainable Development Goals, human rights, equity and inclusion, Indigenous Peoples, climate change, greenhouse gas emissions, support for artisanal and small-scale mining, collaboration, and reporting. Together, they provide a common reference point for the direction the gold sector should take to strengthen trust, improve practices, and contribute positively to society.

It is not an attempt to create yet another standard, rulebook, or certification layer for the industry. The gold market already has many initiatives, frameworks, and standards in place, many of them highly valuable and well established. But most apply to particular parts of the value chain or to specific sustainability issues. The Gold Principles take a broader view. Their role is to connect, align, and amplify. They are meant to raise awareness, encourage practical progress, and make it easier for the industry to work together around shared objectives.

This collaborative spirit is at the heart of the Gold Principles Group. The signatories are not individual companies, but industry associations, trade bodies, and exchanges. This is deliberate. It means that the Gold Principles can be carried through existing networks to a much wider audience across the gold ecosystem. In practical terms, it gives the Gold Principles Group a broader platform to share resources, promote knowledge transfer, and deepen understanding of what responsible practice looks like across different parts of the market.

A dedicated website was created to bring together resources already produced by signatories that support implementation of the Principles. This is important because many organisations, especially those new to the topic, are not looking for abstract statements. They are looking for usable guidance, practical examples, and a clearer sense of what to do next.

In 2025, the Gold Principles Group approved an implementation roadmap to guide progress over the short, medium, and long term. In the short term, the focus is on building awareness, strengthening capacity, and aligning with relevant industry standards. In the medium term, the objective is to scale implementation, improve market alignment, and use data and shared learning to drive further progress. Over the longer term, the aspiration is more ambitious: sector-wide transformation and measurable impact linked to the Principles.

To support this roadmap, action plans are now being developed across 2026. These are intended to turn broad principles into practical steps. It allows progress to be recognised fairly, encourages continual improvement, and makes the process more realistic and inclusive across the value chain.

The initiative is moving beyond its founding phase and into a more implementation-focused stage. The Gold Principles is a collective effort by the gold sector to promote more responsible and sustainable practices through collaboration, practical support, and shared commitment.

As chair of the Gold Principles Group, I see this as both a responsibility and a long-term opportunity. The gold industry has many strengths, but trust and credibility must always be earned and renewed. The Gold Principles are how we are choosing to do that, together.

To learn more about the Gold Principles, the implementation roadmap, action plans, and the resources made available by its signatories, please visit the Gold Principles website at https://goldprinciples.org.

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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

THE SINGAPORE MINT'S ROLE IN A RISING GOLD ECOSYSTEM

As Singapore builds up market infrastructure to deepen its position as a trusted gold trading centre, the institutions that underpin confidence in physical gold – quality, authenticity, secure custody and reliable liquidity – become even more important.

Institutions across the precious metals ecosystem are reassessing the roles they play globally and within Asia. For The Singapore Mint, this is not a new entry into gold, but the continuation of a legacy shaped by the nation's monetary history and precious metals trade.

Established in 1968, The Singapore Mint has long served in a sovereign minting capacity, producing circulation currency and commemorative coins that reflect the nation's identity and milestones. Over the decades, it has worked closely with national institutions and various government authorities, building a reputation grounded in precision, security, trust and transparency. That heritage has shaped not only its capabilities, but also its role within the broader numismatics and precious metals ecosystem.

Today, as market dynamics evolve, that role is extending beyond minting into more active participation in the investment-grade precious metals market.

SINGAPORE'S ROLE IN GOLD

The recent announcement by the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) and the Singapore Bullion Market Association (SBMA), setting out focus areas to strengthen Singapore's position as a trusted gold trading centre serving the Asia-Pacific region, reflects a broader recognition of Asia's growing influence in global gold demand.

Rising wealth, geopolitical uncertainty and a sustained preference for physical assets continue to support demand for gold across the region. Singapore's strong regulatory framework, connectivity and financial ecosystem help to facilitate these flows, particularly in Southeast Asia, where markets are becoming more interconnected and cross-border transactions are increasing.

In this context, market development is not only about institutional trading and settlement. It also depends on how efficiently supply can be made available securely, transparently and at the right denominations to meet growing end-investor demand.

FROM COLLECTIBLES TO INVESTMENT-GRADE BULLION: A STRUCTURAL SHIFT IN DEMAND

Over the past decade, The Singapore Mint has observed a clear and sustained shift in how gold is perceived and acquired, from collectibles and jewellery-led purchases to physical investment products.

This transition has been driven by several factors. Wider access to global pricing and market information has made gold more transparent and comparable as an asset class. Prolonged macroeconomic uncertainty, including inflationary pressures and currency volatility, has reinforced gold's role as a store of value. At the same time, digital distribution channels have

lowered barriers to entry, enabling more investors to access physical gold in smaller, more affordable denominations. There is also a growing shift in mindset, particularly among younger buyers, towards viewing gold as part of a diversified portfolio rather than a one-off purchase.

The distinction between collectors and investors is therefore not merely behavioural but structural. Where collectors seek uniqueness, investors seek standardisation; where collectors value story, investors prioritise assurance.

Commemorative coin and medallion collectors derive value from narrative, rarity, design, limited mintages and cultural significance. Their engagement is often episodic, tied to themes or milestones. Investors, by contrast, derive value from liquidity and price alignment. Their engagement is continuous, shaped by market conditions and portfolio considerations.

This shift has important implications for market development. As demand becomes more investment-driven, the need for standardised, transparent and accessible products increases, reinforcing the importance of trusted intermediaries that can bridge institutional supply with end investors.

FROM HERITAGE TO MARKET ACCESS: THE SINGAPORE MINT'S EVOLVING ROLE

Decades of experience in minting and precious metals have established The Singapore Mint's credibility in areas where trust, precision and transparency are paramount. Its historical role as Singapore's sovereign mint, and its long-standing association with public authorities, have required consistent adherence to stringent standards of quality, security, governance and accountability. These standards are not optional. They are institutional requirements, and they have shaped operating discipline and reputation over time. This foundation differentiates The Singapore Mint from purely commercial operators whose credibility is built primarily through market participation.

That legacy can provide an additional layer of assurance for investors, particularly in an environment where authenticity, counterparty risk and long-term credibility are central considerations in building a gold trading centre trusted by both institutional and private participants.

Building on this foundation, The Singapore Mint has extended its role beyond traditional minting into enabling access to physical, investment-grade gold. It aims to serve as a trusted access point for individuals and institutions seeking confidence in product authenticity, custody and liquidity. Lion Bullion reflects this approach in practice – an investment-grade product built on The Singapore Mint's established standards of quality, custody and transparency.

The Singapore Mint Building

Lion Bullion minted bar (Image: The Singapore Mint)

LION BULLION™: ENABLING BROADER PARTICIPATION

Lion Bullion™ reflects The Singapore Mint's approach to supporting broader participation in the investment-grade gold market.

Backed by The Singapore Mint and produced in partnership with world-renowned refinery, PAMP, Lion Bullion™ is designed to align with international standards of quality. A range of denominations and vaulting options supports different investor needs, while availability through digital channels enhances accessibility and ease of ownership.

A core focus is trust and transparency, expressed through product standards and sell-back frameworks reinforce confidence in physical gold.

LOOKING AHEAD: A GROWING ROLE IN THE ECOSYSTEM

As Singapore's gold market continues to develop, the role of established institutions will become increasingly important.

The Singapore Mint is well positioned to contribute through its experience in precious metals handling, a strong brand presence known to both institutions and consumers, and an operating model shaped by governance and transparency. Lion Bullion brings together investment-grade products, secure storage options, and secured sell-back options supported by a retail and digital presence that allows investors to vault, collect or take delivery of physical gold.

The Singapore Mint is also well-placed to support the broader movement of gold within the region. With Singapore's connectivity and reputation, The Singapore Mint can contribute to facilitating flows across Asia-Pacific markets and strengthening regional distribution networks.

As the ecosystem matures, the ability to integrate trust, access and physical gold capabilities will matter increasingly in shaping Singapore's role within the global market.

Singapore's growing prominence in the global gold market reflects broader shifts in demand, participation and market structure. While policy helps to set direction, the development of a robust ecosystem depends on the capabilities and contributions of its participants.

For The Singapore Mint, this represents an evolution of a long-standing role. From its origins as a sovereign mint to an expanding presence in investment-grade gold, it continues to adapt in line with the market.

As the gold ecosystem develops, The Singapore Mint is focused on contributing where it matters most: strengthening trust, enabling access to physical gold and supporting the market's long-term growth.

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OPINION - INDONESIA'S BULLION MARKET TRANSFORMATION: ATM GOLD AND INNOVATION DRIVING THE NEXT GROWTH PHASE

By DAVID MAKSUD, *President Director, Brink's Indonesia*

Indonesia is accelerating the transformation of its bullion market, supported by strategic policy direction, regulatory reform, and growing industry participation.

As global demand for gold strengthens amid economic uncertainty, the country is repositioning gold from a traditional commodity into a strategic financial asset.

> **"AT THE CENTRE OF THIS SHIFT IS THE INDONESIA BULLION ECOSYSTEM ROADMAP 2026–2031, INTRODUCED BY THE OTORITAS JASA KEUANGAN (OJK)**

At the centre of this shift is the Indonesia Bullion Ecosystem Roadmap 2026–2031, introduced by the Otoritas Jasa Keuangan (OJK). The roadmap outlines a comprehensive plan to develop a fully integrated bullion ecosystem spanning the entire value chain – from upstream mining and refining to downstream financial services and trading.

The roadmap focuses on expanding bullion-based financial services, developing gold-backed investment instruments, and strengthening governance and market standards. It also aligns with Indonesia's broader downstreaming *(hilirisasi)* agenda, aimed at increasing domestic value creation from gold resources (OJK, 2026).

ROADMAP SETS STRATEGIC DIRECTION

The roadmap serves as the foundation for the country's bullion market transformation, providing a clear strategy to build a fully integrated gold ecosystem – from mining and refining to financial services.

It focuses on expanding bullion-based financial services, developing gold-backed investment instruments, and strengthening governance and market standards. It also aligns with Indonesia's downstreaming (hilirisasi) agenda, aimed at retaining more value domestically.

Through this initiative, gold is increasingly positioned not just as a commodity, but as a strategic financial asset within Indonesia's evolving economy (OJK, 2026).

REGULATION IN MOTION: OJK STRENGTHENS THE FOUNDATION OF INDONESIA'S BULLION MARKET

Regulatory reform has become a key pillar in accelerating Indonesia's bullion market transformation. OJK has introduced a series of policies aimed at formalising bullion business activities and expanding the range of gold-based financial products.

Key initiatives include the implementation of POJK No. 17/2024, which provides legal clarity for bullion operations, the introduction of gold-backed ETFs in 2026, and the early development of gold tokenisation, with pilot transactions reaching approximately IDR 8 billion (S$591,200).

These measures are expected to enhance transparency, strengthen governance, and encourage broader participation from financial institutions and investors. Indonesia's bullion market is steadily evolving into a more structured, regulated, and investable ecosystem. (OJK, 2026).

ATM GOLD EXPANDS MARKET ACCESS

An ATM Gold machine deployed by Brink's Indonesia

"ONE OF THE MOST NOTABLE DEVELOPMENTS IS THE RISE OF ATM GOLD (ALSO REFERRED TO AS GOLD ATM OR ATGM), WHICH ENABLES AUTOMATED BUYING AND SELLING OF PHYSICAL GOLD.

Beyond policy and regulation, infrastructure innovation is emerging as a significant driver of change. One of the most notable developments is the rise of ATM Gold (also referred to as Gold ATM or ATGM), which enables automated buying and selling of physical gold.

Brink's Indonesia is leading the deployment of ATM Gold across major institutions, including AMMAN Mineral, ANTAM, Hartadinata Abadi, BCA Syariah, and BSI. This initiative marks a shift from manual, limited transactions towards automated, on-demand access, making gold investment accessible to a broader population.

Market observers note that ATM Gold is evolving into a critical infrastructure layer, connecting producers, financial institutions, and retail investors within a more integrated ecosystem.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES AHEAD

Indonesia's bullion market transformation presents significant opportunities, particularly in mobilising idle gold assets held by households. Integrating these assets into the financial system, the country could expand financial inclusion, strengthen domestic liquidity, and enhance market depth.

Challenges remain, however. Market liquidity is still developing, and strong cultural preferences for physical gold continue to shape consumer behaviour. Integration with global bullion markets also requires further alignment in standards, infrastructure, and regulation.

MARKET IN TRANSITION

Despite these challenges, Indonesia's direction is clear. With strong policy support from OJK, growing industry participation, and infrastructure innovation such as ATM Gold, the country is well-positioned to unlock the full potential of its gold market.

As accessibility improves and financialisation accelerates, Indonesia is on track to evolve into a modern and integrated bullion hub in Southeast Asia – one where gold plays an increasingly important role in investment, financial markets, and economic growth.

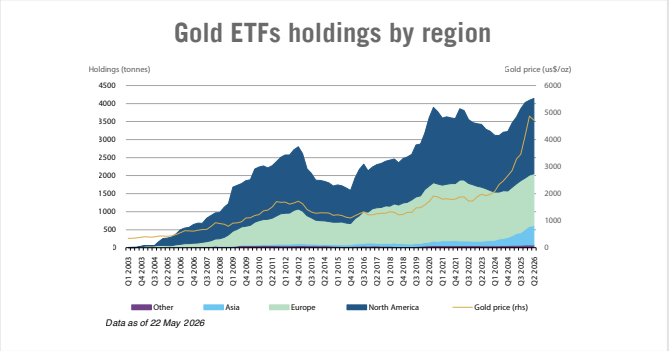
DAVID MAKSUD President Director of Brink's Indonesia, brings over two decades of industry experience to his role. With a proven track record of driving growth, optimising operations, and fostering a culture of excellence, David has been instrumental in shaping Brink's Indonesia's trajectory in recent years, positioning it as a trailblazer in the evolving landscape of cash services.

DIGITAL GOLD IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

By TAN KWAY GUAN, *Central Banks and Public Policy Lead (Singapore), World Gold Council*

Gold had a standout year in 2025 with both gold demand and price reaching record highs, with investment demand being a major driver. Global Investment demand for gold in 2025 reached 2175.3 tonnes, up 83.5% from the 1185.4 tonnes in 2024. While Q1 2026 has seen some outflows in Western markets, Asian demand remains strong. The World Gold Council expects demand to remain strong through 2026 on the back of geopolitical factors driving central bank demand, broad global ETF inflows and bar and coin accumulation.

In terms of methods for accessing gold, gold ETFs have grown to become an increasingly popular channel globally. While the bulk of gold ETF holdings remains in North America and Europe, the share of global gold ETF holdings in Asia has notably grown in recent years. This trend towards gold ETFs in Asia is expected to remain resilient: even as sell-offs were observed in other regions in March 2026, Asia continued to see inflows to gold ETFs.



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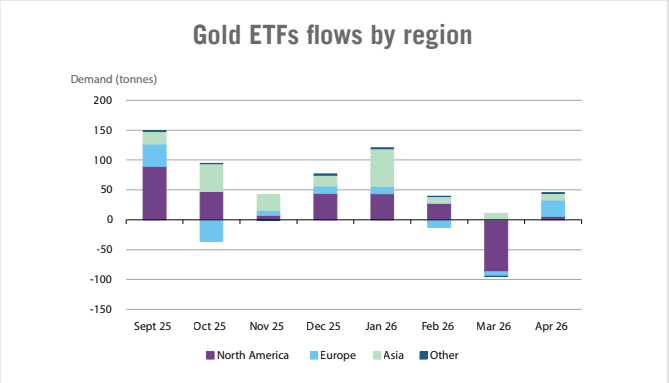


Sources: Bloomberg, Company Filings, ICE Benchmark Administration, World Gold Council; Disclaimer: https://www.gold.org/terms-and-conditions#proprietary-rights

Beyond ETFs, digital gold also encompasses digital gold accounts and gold tokens, which are a fast-growing segment. These digital gold formats enable investors to overcome traditional issues associated with physical gold such as larger minimums, offline buying, exchange fees and storage. Digital gold products do this by:

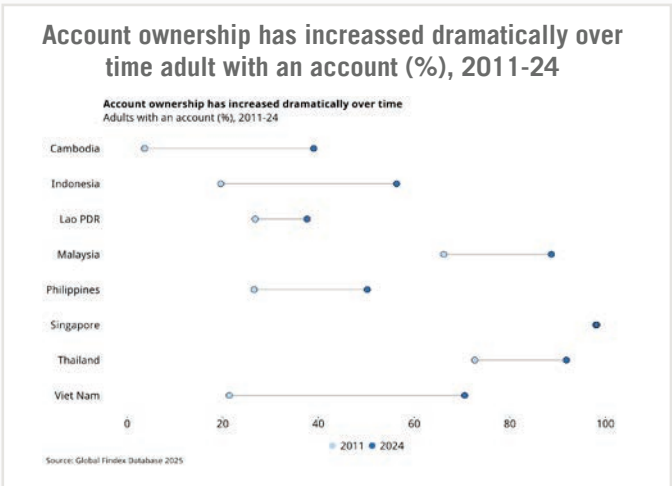
- Making it easy to start and continue investing (e.g., small minimums, recurring buys, simple portfolio placement).
- Offering the right format for different needs (e.g., ETF-like exposure, vaulted accounts, tokenised products).
- Building confidence with clear pricing, clear custody and audit information, and simple rules for selling or taking delivery.

Done right, digital gold enables ease of access to gold investments for a wider range of investors particularly among younger retail investors.

SOUTH EAST ASIA'S MARKET POTENTIAL

The economies of Southeast Asia (SEA) present a clear opportunity for digital gold products. SEA is a region with a growing population of approximately 695.3 million people. It comprises mainly middle-income countries with the exception of Singapore which is high-income. Annual GDP per capita ranged from $1,332 to $90,674 in 2024.[1,2] The region is set to continue its strong growth, despite the global economy facing headwinds stemming from increased geopolitical risks. In April 2026, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) revised its global growth forecast for 2026 down from 3.3% to 3.1%.[3] While also expected to slow, SEA remains a bright spot: the ASEAN+3 Macroeconomic Research Office expects ASEAN-10 to grow at 4.6% in 2026, beating global growth.[4,5] Inflation is also expected to rise both globally and in SEA. The IMF projects global inflation at 4.4% for 2026. Against this backdrop, the outlook for gold investments in SEA is positive as the growing pool of investors in the region seek effective hedges.

In tandem with this economic development, SEA is becoming increasingly digitally savvy. The pace of digitalisation has been accelerating, with ownership of digital finance accounts having grown dramatically over time across the region.[6] Digital wealth in the ASEAN-10 economies is reaching scale with total AUM of approximately $90 billion and projected to reach $410 billion to $457 billion by 2030. Digital platforms have been aggressively acquiring customers and competing with traditional banks to serve the underbanked. Finance apps as a share of app downloads in SEA grew from 6% to 12%, outpacing many emerging and mature economies.[7] All this speaks to a rapidly growing pool of retail investors with growing incomes for which digital gold products would be an attractive means to access gold as an investment product.



Sources: Global Findex Database 2025

Government support for gold as an investment product is also growing in the region. In recent years, several regional governments have announced policies to grow and develop the gold industry in their respective countries. Notable initiatives include Indonesia, one of the world's largest gold exporters, which launched its "2026–2031 Roadmap for the Development and Strengthening of Bullion Business Activities and Ecosystems". Through this roadmap, Indonesia is looking to strengthen its national bullion system and further deepen its financial market including the development of gold ETFs.[8]

Lao PDR, another SEA economy with gold reserves, has also launched the Lao Bullion Bank with the mandate to "accumulate gold to ensure stability and create financial and treasury liquidity, guarantee the value of the Kip currency at a stable level, and contribute to raising Lao industrial standards up to international standards, increasing the value of resources to maximise value and benefits, and create economic stability for Laos".[9] The Lao Bullion Bank has indicated that it has ambitions to provide digital platforms for gold trading.

Singapore, already an international hub for gold trading, has also announced the formation of a Gold Market Development Working Group to strengthen the country's position as a trusted gold trading centre serving the Asia-Pacific region. Key focus areas include developing gold-related capital market products to facilitate price discovery and build liquidity, putting in place robust and internationally-aligned standards for vaulting and logistics, and building a Singapore-based clearing system to support secure and efficient OTC settlement for trading large bar and kilobar gold in Singapore.

Collectively, these broad trends and developments in SEA speak to a burgeoning gold market geared towards digitally enabled solutions and products.

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

While SEA is a promising market for digital gold, there remain some challenges inherent to digital gold products and the region that should be addressed. Digital gold products are highly fragmented with individual providers building stand-alone infrastructure. This fragmentation creates a series of issues. Firstly, gold's liquidity and fungibility are key properties that make gold attractive as an investment instrument. The fragmentation of digital gold infrastructure globally exposes investors to differences in custody structures, regulatory standards, audit standards and processes across products. The consequence is that digital gold is often not interchangeable and cannot move across platforms, limiting the financial usefulness of the product.

Second, investors are exposed to trust and transparency concerns as there is a lack of systemic mechanisms to ensure that the products are fully backed by physical gold, secure in stress scenarios and properly audited. Being digital in nature also adds a layer of cybersecurity risk. Users often need to independently assess products, which weakens trust in them. To address these issues and others, the World Gold Council has published a white paper which presents the case for shared infrastructure for digital gold and introduces the Gold as a Service concept being developed.[10]

Domestically, the digital financial literacy levels of the population remain a key issue. Research by the OECD finds digital financial literacy to be lagging in several SEA countries.[11] This presents a strong impediment to the uptake of digital gold investments. Regional governments have recognised this as a key policy issue to be addressed and are actively partnering internationally to improve digital financial literacy.[12]

[1] SEA here comprises Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam and Timor Leste

[2] The World Bank. World Development Indicators

[3] International Monetary Fund. 2026. World Economic Outlook: Global Economy in the Shadow of War

[4] ASEAN-10 comprises Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam

[5] ASEAN+3 Macroeconomic Research Office. 2026. ASEAN+3 Regional Economic Outlook 2026

[6] The World Bank. Global Findex Database 2025

[7] Google, Temasek and Bain. e-Conomy SEA 2025

[8] Indonesia Financial Services Authority (OJK) OJK Launches Roadmap for the Development and Strengthening of Bullion Business Activities and Ecosystem 2026–2031

[9] Laotian Times. December 6, 2024, "Lao Bullion Bank Officially Opens Its First Financial Institution in Laos".

[10] World Gold Council and BCG Digital Gold: The Case for a Shared Infrastructure

[11] OECD. OECD/INFE 2023 INTERNATIONAL SURVEY OF ADULT FINANCIAL LITERACY

[12] ASEAN. Joint Statement of the Thirteenth ASEAN Finance Ministers' and Central Bank Governors' Meeting

TAN KWAY GUAN, joined the World Gold Council as Central Banks and Public Policy Lead, Singapore in 2025. Previously, he was a research associate and principal project Manager at the Asia Competitiveness Institute, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, where he led development economics research and public policy advisory for ASEAN governments. Kway Guan authored multiple publications on development economics, international trade, public policy and applied econometrics.

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THE GROWTH OF DERIVATIVES AND THE CASE FOR REGIONAL METALS MARKETS

By RUSSELL ROBERTSON, *Chief Business Development Officer, Abaxx Exchange and Clearing*

The evolution of derivatives markets represents one of the most important developments in industrial risk management, transforming localised basis risk into globally integrated systems of price discovery, hedging, and capital flows.

These instruments are not merely speculative tools but an essential means for any business exposed to commodity markets to manage price risk.

THE HISTORY OF DERIVATIVES

The origins of futures trading can be traced back to 1634 with the Dutch "Tulip mania", when bulb prices soared to extraordinary heights before collapsing in 1637 – arguably the first recorded pricing bubble and the first noted use of financial "forward contracts".

> "THE ORIGINS OF FUTURES TRADING CAN BE TRACKED BACK TO 1634 WITH THE DUTCH "TULIP MANIA"

By the late 20th century, derivatives markets had expanded well beyond agricultural commodities into instruments such as interest rates, foreign exchange, energy and metals.

Data from the Futures Industry Association (FIA) illustrates the significant growth of derivatives instruments (futures and options) until a recent dip caused by regulatory changes in the Indian financial markets that cut total options market volume by 58% year on year.

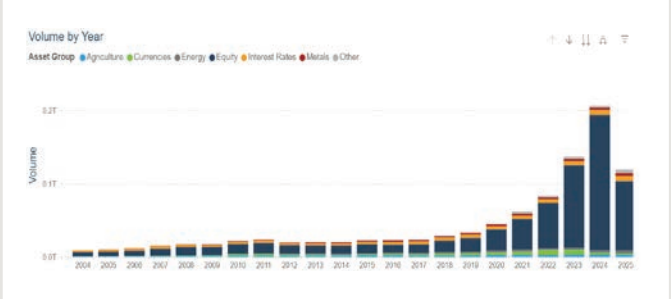

Fig.1: Volume by Year for global derivatives (Futures and Options). Data: FIA.

Looking at global futures contracts in isolation, the picture is unambiguously positive: a continued uptrend of 9% year on year with no regulatory headwind.

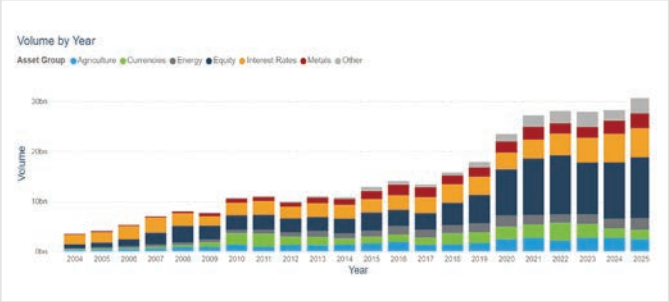

Fig.2: Volume by Year for global derivatives (Futures Only). Data: FIA.

SUPPLY AND DEMAND FUNDAMENTALS

Supply and demand fundamentals are the baseline for price discovery in any commodity market: the more plentiful a good, the lower its price should be in theory.

A review of metals supply and demand over the past five years reveals several developments that have shifted market balances, accelerated adoption of precious metals futures and amplified price volatility.

On the demand side, central bank buying has been substantial, and the global push for energy transition and electrification has generated significant demand for silver and base metals. On the supply side, structural tightness has persisted alongside silver ore deficits, affecting both production and logistics. Both supply and demand have been subject to heightened volatility, with geopolitically driven tariffs disrupting commodity flows.

World Gold Council data nevertheless shows that, despite these price swings, the underlying with supply/demand balance for gold has remained broadly stable.

The result is growing trading activity – more buyers and sellers – and a shift in how gold is perceived: less as a traditional industrial commodity and more as an investment instrument. This trend is sometimes described as "futurisation".

PRICE CORRELATION AND REGIONAL FOCUS

These supply and demand dynamics have marked a structural inflection point in markets, characterised by the convergence of macroeconomic and geopolitical uncertainty, new technological demand drivers and shifting commodity flows.

Trading activity across metals futures and options surged to record 3.8 billion contracts in 2025 and up 24% year on year – the largest annual increase since the US Dodd-Frank act changed regulations to move swaps to futures in 2007-2008.

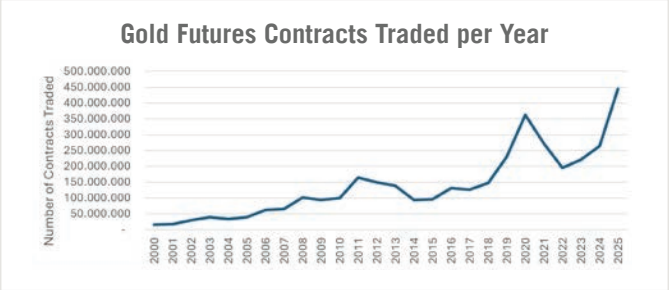

Fig.3: Gold Futures traded volume. Data: FIA.

As participation in precious metals markets grows and price volatility persists, the case for regional trading hubs and localised price discovery becomes compelling. There is a clear need to capture the price of gold at its point of consumption – not just at financial hubs such as London and New York, where the physical bars in question may never have traded.

Abaxx Exchange and Clearing listed a Singapore physically delivered 1 kg gold futures contract on 12 June 2025, giving participants a means to manage price risk on kilobars in Singapore, with the option of physical delivery to a Brinks vault in Singapore. Bars delivered to the vault are not subject to GST unless removed domestically, and must meet LBMA good delivery standards.

By focusing on physically deliverable contracts and integrating modern clearing technologies, Abaxx aims to bridge the gap between physical and financial markets, enhancing price transparency, efficiency, and capital utilisation.

Based in Singapore, Russell joined Abaxx Exchange and Clearing in September 2025 as Chief Business Development Officer. Russell is a seasoned executive with over 25 years of experience in financial markets across the full trade life cycle from trading to clearing. He has deep knowledge of derivative markets from key roles as a senior multi-asset proprietary trader, operational product development at CME Group in London and Clearing technology with ICE Clear Europe. He was previously chief commercial officer at the Gulf Mercantile Exchange since 2019, where he oversaw the commercial business and the management of the Oman crude oil derivatives market and East of Suez benchmark pricing.

Bloomberg data shows that even where prices vary by region, sufficient correlation exists to allow participants to hedge specific regional exposures as part of their commercial operations or institutional investment opportunities. Adopting such risk management practices provides meaningful protection against the impact of regional geopolitical developments.

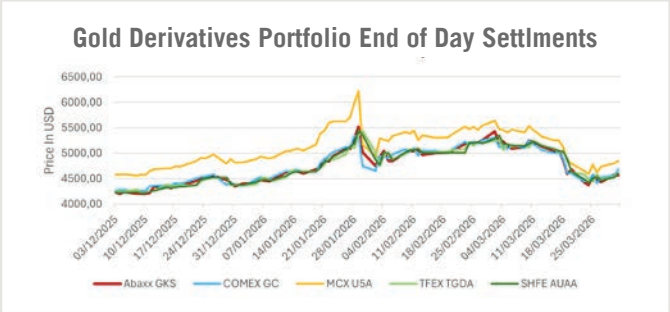

Fig. 5: Data: FIA.

As the geopolitical landscape shifts and attention turns increasingly to regional commodity pricing, FIA data confirms significant volume growth in Asia-based metals trading.

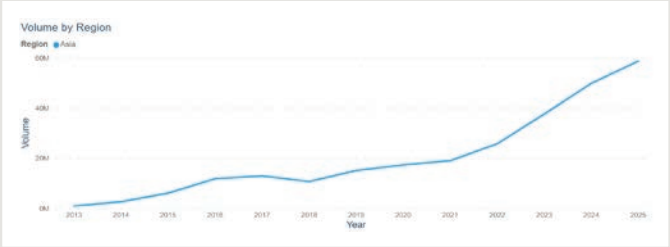

Fig. 5: Asia metals trading volume. Data: FIA.

CONCLUSION

From tulips to algorithmic-driven futures markets, derivatives have evolved into one of the most important pillars of global finance. The events of the last five years have transformed the metals market: metal products are no longer peripheral commodities but central inputs to the global economic transition and, increasingly, benchmarks for economic performance.

Initiatives such as Abaxx, alongside MAS-led programmes including Project Guardian and Project Lion, are advancing this evolution – underscoring Singapore's commitment to integrating digital assets and financial infrastructure as a foundation for next-generation market structure.

The metals futures market is no longer just about hedging risk. It is about pricing the future of the global economy itself.

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RETAINING & ACCELERATING TALENT IN PGMS THROUGH CROSS-COMPANY MENTORING

The platinum group metals sector sits at the intersection of global industry, technology and the energy transition. As demand shifts and supply constraints persist, organisations are being asked to deliver resilience alongside operational excellence. In this context, talent is not a background issue but a strategic one.

This is the backdrop against which the Women in Platinum Group Metals cross company mentoring programme, delivered by Moving Ahead, plays a timely and important role.

WHY RETENTION AND PROGRESSION MATTER NOW

For a sector built on deep expertise and long career arcs, just as essential as attracting new talent is ensuring progression, visibility and long term retention for those already within it. But it's also about who progresses and stays.

This is not a challenge any single organisation can address alone. In a connected sector like PGMs, where skills and experience move across company boundaries, talent development drives knowledge transfer and innovation – but without clear pathways for professional growth and career progression, it can also contribute to mid career attrition, particularly for women who may have fewer visible role models or support at critical transition points.

Wilma Swarts, chair of Women in Platinum Group Metals and director of PGM research, Metals Focus, explained: "Over the past three years, the Women in Platinum Group Metals mentoring programme has been a genuine force for good in our industry. Where else would a young aspiring business development consultant in the recycling industry or mining process engineer get one-to-one time with a CEO or a senior trader with decades of experience?"

THE POWER OF MENTORING

The Women in Platinum Group Metals programme brings together mentors and mentees from across the sector in a world-class mentoring experience delivered by Moving Ahead – a leading global expert in structured cross-company mentoring. It is designed to support women's progression by combining purposeful matching, clear expectations and a strong focus on practical career outcomes.

"When mentoring is intentional and well-structured, the impact is felt both in individual confidence and in the strength of the wider talent pipeline. This programme sends a clear and important message: women are supported, valued, and have a future in this sector. For many participants, it has been genuinely game-changing — and that is exactly what we set out to achieve", Swarts added.

At its core, the programme is built on a simple premise: talented women are more likely to stay and progress in the sector when they have access to experience, perspective, challenge and supportive networks. Cross company mentoring creates those conditions at scale and adds an important additional dimension. By pairing participants with mentors from outside their own organisation, it enables more open career conversations, broader sector insight and access to networks that extend beyond internal structures.

Liz Dimmock, founder and CEO of Moving Ahead, said: "Cross company programmes create space for honest, high quality and timely career conversations that individuals don't always get access to elsewhere. We've worked with over 400 organisations and 40,000 individuals globally since 2014, and cross-company mentoring consistently creates a positive impact on both mentors' and mentees' careers, with a ripple effect across the sectors they work in".

VOICES FROM THE PROGRAMME

Programme impact data shows improved confidence for mentees, who report benefiting from external perspectives within the sector, and mentors who describe participation as a mutually beneficial, positive and fulfilling experience. A number of mentees even report promotions, expanded responsibilities and role moves within just nine months on the programme.

The stories of individual mentors and mentees provide powerful insight into how cross company mentoring supports careers in practice.

Doris Bao
(Director, Gold Harvest Management) – Mentor and mentee

With over 20 years in the precious metals market, Doris joined the programme as both a mentor and a mentee while navigating a major career transition. Moving from a senior banking role to independent consulting prompted questions about confidence and direction. One mentoring conversation proved pivotal. "She encouraged me to be myself and follow my heart," Doris explains. "That moment really touched me". The programme helped her reframe self-doubt and move forward with confidence.

As a mentor, Doris saw similar shifts in others. "They became more positive and more confident", she says, reinforcing her belief in mentoring as a powerful accelerator of sustainable careers in PGMs.

Anna Marchisio
(Business Development Manager, Critical Raw Materials Recycling Hensel Recycling GmbH) – Mentor

Now in her third year as a mentor, Anna has seen clear shifts in how mentees approach decisions and progress.

One mentee arrived "completely confused" and unhappy in her role. Through mentoring, she made concrete changes, explored internal opportunities and gained clarity without needing to leave her organisation. "It was quite a change", Anna explained, "But she moved from being puzzled to being extremely focused".

Another mentee accepted a new external role after Anna deliberately stepped back. "I just listened", she said, allowing the mentee to act "with her own courage, without pressure". For Anna, impact lies in confidence, agency and sustained forward movement.

Maitshoko Tumane
(Consultant, ERM) – Mentee

Maitshoko joined the programme while questioning her career direction and confidence to move closer to the mining sector. "I was at a point where I didn't know whether to turn left, right, or pause", she explained. Through mentoring, she reframed self judgement and took tangible steps forward — updating her CV, posting on LinkedIn for the first time and reaching out directly to industry contacts. "I was very afraid of putting myself out there," she said. "Now I take baby steps, and that's a big change".

For Maitshoko, the programme translated reflection into action, building confidence, visibility and momentum.

Karen Otto
(Group Marketing Manager, Northam Platinum Holdings Limited) – Mentor

As a mentor, Karen has seen how mentoring accelerates career movement. One mentee reassessed her direction, gained confidence and ultimately transitioned into a new technical field. "She just needed guidance on how to approach the conversation," Karen explained. That support helped the mentee secure training and a new role elsewhere.

Equally impactful was Karen's own shift in approach. "You think you're helping", she reflected, "But sometimes you're actually getting in the way". By stepping back, Karen enabled autonomy and growth — reinforcing that mentoring impact often lies in listening, not leading.

Mel Devine
(Sales Operations Specialist, Valterra Platinum) – Mentee

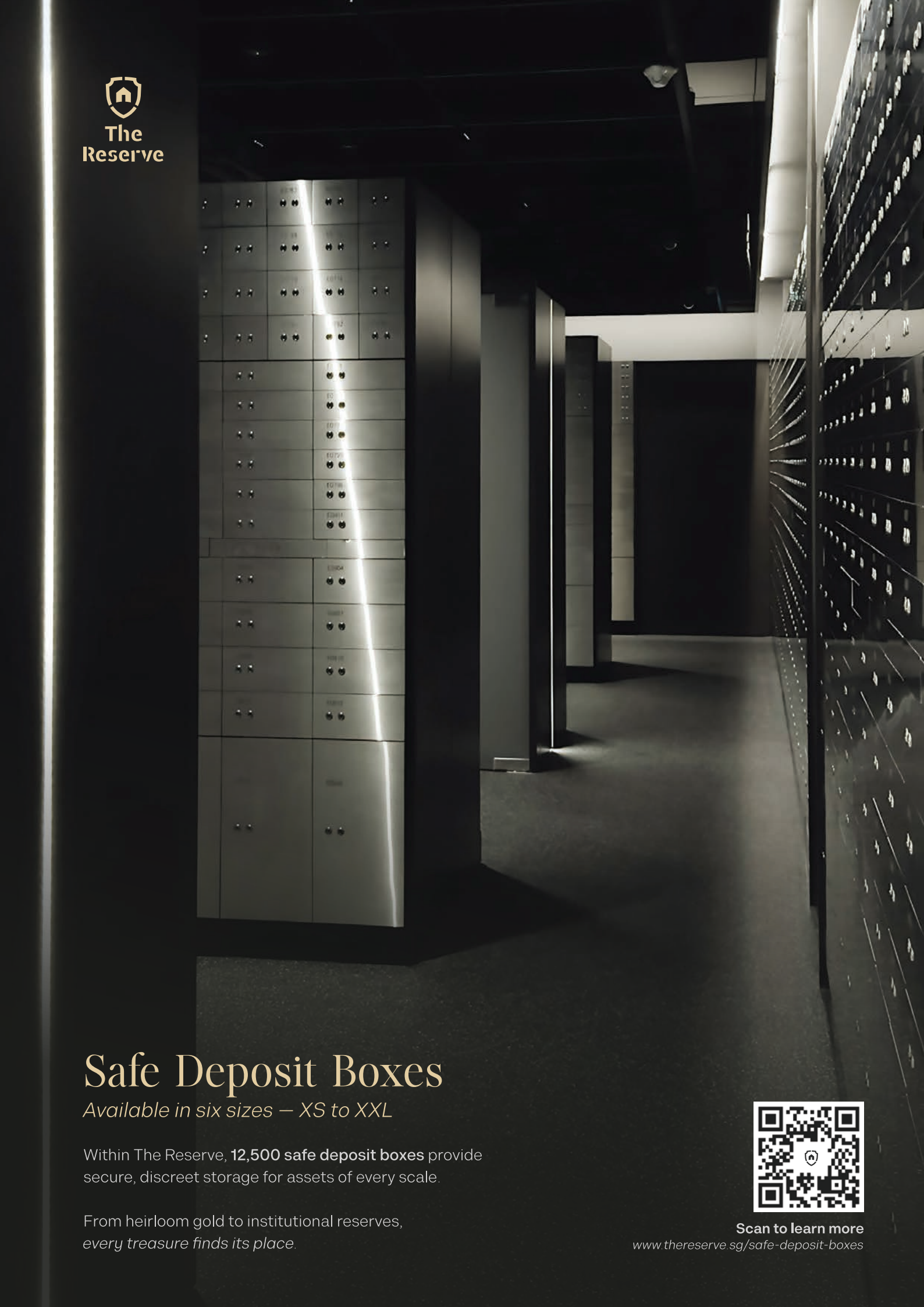
With decades in PGMs, Mel joined as a mentee to gain perspective at a pivotal career stage. "I needed direction — an outsider's view of my options", she explained. Her mentor helped her reconnect with networks, explore consultancy pathways and rebuild confidence about the future. "It's been a huge confidence booster", Mel said.

Her mindset has shifted: "I now put myself in rooms and conversations differently". For Mel, the impact lies in clarity, renewed agency and readiness for a sustainable next chapter.

STRENGTHENING THE SECTOR THROUGH COLLABORATION

As the sector continues to navigate change, sustained investment in people will remain essential. Done well, mentoring ensures that more women can see, pursue and sustain long term careers in platinum group metals, to the benefit of individuals, organisations and the industry as a whole.

Register your interest for the next cohort by emailing judith.evans@moving-ahead.org.



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WHY TOKENISATION MATTERS FOR THE BULLION INDUSTRY AND HOW CARRYING COSTS FIT IN

By EVA MENG, *Head of Matrixdock*

Erratum: An earlier version of this article published on 14 June 2026 referred to "LBMA-accredited supply chain", "LBMA-accredited gold", "LBMA-only supply chain" and "LBMA-accredited vaults". These references to LBMA-accreditation have been removed for accuracy. For more information, please see: https://sbma.org.sg/news/clarification-and-apology-crucible-issue-38/

Gold has served as the foundation of financial trust for centuries, not by convention, but by consensus. Governments, institutions, and individuals across every era have independently arrived at the same conclusion: gold holds.

Consensus alone does not determine what an asset can do. It only determines where trust begins. The history of financial innovation is not about creating new assets; it is about making existing ones more accessible, more liquid, and more useful. The printing press did not invent money. Electronic trading did not invent equities. Each innovation rewired what already existed, and in doing so unlocked value that was always there but could not move. Tokenisation works the same way.

This is why asset selection matters more than technology. A real-world asset (RWA) token derives its value from the asset beneath it. Sovereign debt has been among the earliest assets to see adoption in tokenisation: the most liquid, most institutionally understood instrument in global finance. Gold followed naturally: centuries of cross-border consensus, deep physical markets, and a role that every class of institutional investor already understands.

WHAT ETFS DID AND WHAT TOKENS CAN DO NEXT

When gold ETFs launched in the early 2000s, they solved a genuine problem. Holding physical gold was expensive, operationally demanding, and inaccessible to most investors. ETFs removed that friction entirely. Gold became tradable like a stock, held like a fund, and understood by anyone with a brokerage account. It was a real innovation, and for two decades it worked exactly as intended.

But gold ETFs were primarily designed to provide exposure. They were not intended to make gold directly usable across financial operations such as settlement or collateralisation. Instead, gold held through ETFs is accessed via fund shares and generally remains within the fund structure. This was a deliberate design choice that was entirely appropriate for the infrastructure of that era.

That infrastructure is now changing. As settlement systems modernise and programmable finance develops, the question is no longer only who can own gold but what gold can do. Can it settle a transaction instantly? Can it serve as collateral across borders without an intermediary? Can it move through financial systems as deep, widely recognised liquidity? ETFs cannot meet these demands, not because they failed, but because they were never asked to.

This is the generational shift. Gold ETFs financialised gold and brought it into portfolios. Tokenisation is designed to enable broader operational use, potentially allowing gold to be used within certain digital financial infrastructures. Gold tokens do not change what gold is. They change where gold sits in the financial system. For the precious metals industry, this means gold is moving from a passively held asset to an active one: the same gold, with a broader range of potential applications: 24/7 trading, fractional access, cross-border settlement, digital collateral, and B2B payment rails. All without leaving a trusted supply chain.

Figure 1: Tokenised gold market capitalisation, 2020–2026.

The numbers bear this out. The tokenised gold market surpassed $6 billion in market capitalisation in February 2026, having grown 177% year-on-year in 2025. Trading volume reached $178 billion, surpassing all but one U.S.-listed gold ETF. Over 115,000 new wallets were added during the year, nearly tripling the holder base. These are not speculative numbers. They reflect a structural migration of precious metals into programmable digital infrastructure.

THE CARRYING COST CHALLENGE AND A SILVER SOLUTION

While gold's storage costs are relatively modest, silver presents a different economic profile. Silver is bulkier per unit of value, requiring significantly more vault space, higher insurance premiums, and greater logistics overhead. These carrying costs are a defining feature of physical silver ownership and any honest tokenisation of the metal must account for them.

ETFs have long handled this through annual expense ratios. The SPDR Gold Trust (GLD) charges 0.40% per year; the iShares Silver Trust (SLV) charges 0.50%. These ratios are deducted from fund assets daily: metal is periodically sold to cover expenses, so the metal backing per share decreases over time while the share count stays constant. It is an elegant mechanism but it blends genuine custody costs with centralised management fees and profit margins, making it difficult for holders to distinguish what they are actually paying for.

The Fungible Reserve Standard (FRS), published in March 2026 on Social Science Research Network (SSRN), offers a new approach designed specifically for assets where carrying

costs are material. Rather than embedding these costs within a broader fee structure, FRS encodes them transparently into the token's on-chain logic through a variable called q(t):the asset-per-token ratio, which decreases over time at a predefined annualised rate. Functionally, this is analogous to an ETF's declining metal-per-share ratio, but with one key distinction: FRS isolates pure carrying costs (vaulting fees) from management fees and profit margins. What the holder sees on-chain is the actual cost of custody, not a bundled figure that obscures the issuer's economics.

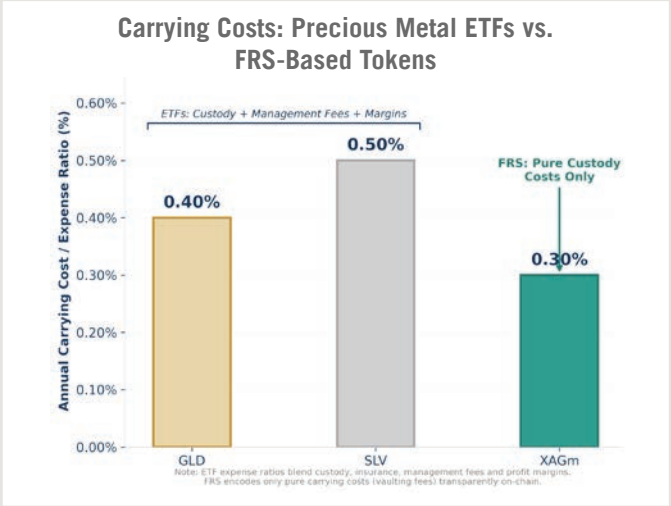

Figure 2: Annual expense ratios of GLD and SLV compared with the FRS-based XAGm carrying cost rate.

The framework is built on what it calls the Economic Purity Principle: the token must faithfully represent the underlying asset's economic characteristics, including its negative carry, rather than masking or transforming them. FRS preserves full compatibility with digital financial markets, where tokens built on it are designed to function in lending, trading, and collateral applications without requiring wrappers or rebasing that fragmented liquidity. It is asset-agnostic: applicable to any physical asset with predictable holding costs, from silver to platinum to warehoused commodities.

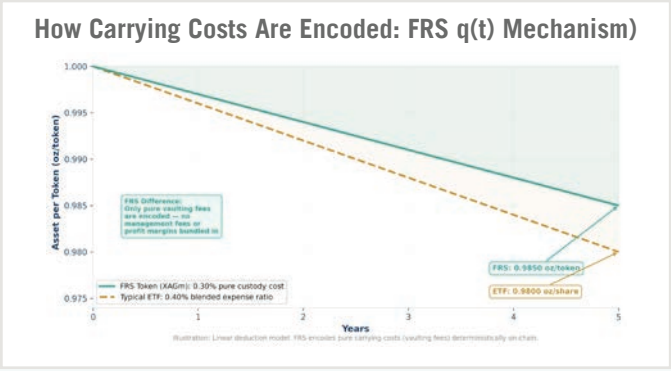

Figure 3: The FRS q(t) mechanism — asset per token declines at a transparent, predetermined custody cost rate.

EVA MENG is the head of Matrixdock, an RWA tokenisation brand owned by BIT (previously known as Matrixport). Eva is passionate about bridging digital assets and traditional finance and is focused on leading the team to build cutting-edge technology in the tokenization space. Prior to BIT, Eva spent over 6 years in the digital asset mining industry.

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

Matrixdock's XAGm, launched in March 2026, is the first tokenised asset built on the FRS framework. Each token is backed by fully allocated LBMA Good Delivery silver bars held in institutional-grade vaults. At launch, one XAGm equals one fine troy ounce of silver; over time, the ozPerToken value decreases daily at an annual 0.3% custody rate reflecting the pure cost of vaulting, with no management fee or profit margin layered on top.

XAGm sits alongside Matrixdock's established gold token, XAUm, which represents one troy ounce of 99.99% pure gold, fully allocated and vaulted by Brink's in Singapore and Hong Kong. XAUm operates with independent physical audits by Bureau Veritas, a trusted supply chain, multi-chain availability across eight networks, and physical redemption in both Singapore and Hong Kong. In April 2026, OSL Group, a licensed Hong Kong digital asset exchange dual-listed both XAUm and XAGm, becoming the first regulated platform in the city to offer simultaneous gold and silver tokens.

The broader trajectory extends beyond commercial products. In December 2025, the Kingdom of Bhutan launched TER (meaning "treasure" in Dzongkha), a sovereign gold-backed token built on Solana with Matrixdock as technology partner. This is one of the first instances of a sovereign state leveraging public blockchain to tokenise national gold reserves.

THE ROAD AHEAD

For the precious metals industry, Tokenisation represents something significant: physical assets moving from passive holding to active use. Not replacing their reserve function, but adding a new layer on top of it. The same metal, stored in the same vaults, audited by the same independent firms, but now capable of settling instantly, serving as programmable collateral, and participating in digital financial markets that operate around the clock.

Gold was the right place to start. Silver, with its dual role as both a reserve asset and a critical industrial input now reportedly in its fifth consecutive year of structural supply deficit, is the natural next step. As tokenisation matures, the standards the industry adopts will determine whether digital precious metals earn the same trust that physical markets have built over generations. The consensus that built gold's value over centuries is being put to work, powering its next evolution.

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DUBAI'S BULLION HUB COMES OF AGE: DBRG AND THE NEXT CHAPTER FOR THE UAE

By MOHAMMAD AYYOB, *Chairman, Dubai Business Group for Bullion and Gold Refinery (DBRG)*

Gold rarely draws attention for what it reveals about institutions. But in the United Arab Emirates, it does. Since the UAE's formation in 1971, bullion has echoed the country's wider economic evolution – from informal trade to scale, infrastructure and, increasingly, regulatory ambition.

Dubai's gold trade began modestly, with shipments ferried across Deira Creek and bargains struck in the Gold Souk. Over decades, that commerce hardened into an integrated system of refineries, banks, vaults and logistics firms. Geography amplified the shift. Positioned between Africa, Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent, the UAE emerged as a natural intermediary between producers and consumers across the Global South.

> "MORE THAN 20% OF THE WORLD'S PHYSICAL GOLD TRADE IS NOW ESTIMATED TO PASS THROUGH THE UAE, WITH ANNUAL FLOWS EXCEEDING $200 BILLION – SECOND ONLY TO SWITZERLAND.

Scale followed. More than 20% of the world's physical gold trade is now estimated to pass through the UAE, with annual flows exceeding $200 billion – second only to Switzerland. Gold and silver have become central to the country's non oil economy, tying it commercially to markets such as India, Turkey, Hong Kong and Switzerland. Yet volume alone is no longer the measure of relevance. As scrutiny over provenance, compliance and financial crime has intensified by bringing responsible sourcing binding on every dealer and refinery, confidence has become as valuable as capacity.

That shift explains the growing importance of standards. The UAE Good Delivery (UAEGD) programme is less a branding exercise than an attempt to move the country's role in the gold market from facilitator to rule shaper. Modelled on international benchmarks, it embeds requirements on responsible sourcing, governance, compliance and transparency – traditional weak points in the global bullion trade.

This matters because gold is unlike most commodities. It sits at the intersection of finance, geopolitics and culture, and its opacity has long invited abuse, from money laundering to sanctions evasion. Jurisdictions that host large trading volumes therefore face a choice: profit from ambiguity or constrain it. By advancing UAEGD and making responsible sourcing and AML/CFT requirements binding, the UAE has opted for constraint.

External recognition suggests the approach is gaining traction. The inclusion of UAEGD refined bars for delivery on India's International Bullion Exchange and the Multi Commodity Exchange is more than procedural. For the world's second largest consumer of gold, it signals trust; for the UAE, it offers validation from a market that confers it sparingly.

This is how influence is accumulated in modern commodity markets – less through controlling flows than by setting the terms under which they circulate. Switzerland did so through refining and finance; London through pricing and clearing. The UAE now appears intent on doing so through strong governance, responsible sourcing, compliance and transparency.

Whether that influence holds can only be judged under pressure. On that score, a recent period of unprecedented geopolitical conflict offered a revealing stress test. Gold flows slowed briefly as uncertainty rippled through markets and

logistics adjusted. The pause was shallow and the recovery quick. Within weeks, the system had resumed servicing producers and consumers across continents. The episode affirmed that the UAE's gold trade is defined increasingly by credibility within a highly networked, trader driven market – and by an ability to sustain that credibility when conditions are at their most testing.

A UNIFIED VOICE FOR THE INDUSTRY

Against this backdrop, the Dubai Business Group for Bullion and Gold Refinery (DBRG) was launched in February 2025 under the auspices of Dubai Chambers. Its creation marked a step change for the UAE's precious metals industry, bringing refiners, bullion traders, logistics firms, vaulting providers, assay laboratories and financial institutions into a single forum able to engage regulators, policymakers and international counterparts coherently.

> **"DBRG'S FOUR-TIER MEMBERSHIP STRUCTURE — COMPRISING PRINCIPAL MEMBERS, MEMBER BANKS, CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS AND AFFILIATE MEMBERS — REFLECTS THE ACTUAL COMPOSITION OF THE UAE BULLION MARKET.**

DBRG's mandate is pragmatic and narrow by design: to support regulatory alignment with international norms, to raise standards on responsible sourcing and AML/CFT compliance across the value chain, and to encourage structured dialogue within a fragmented market. Structured as a not for profit association, its governance and operating framework are benchmarked against established global bullion bodies, signalling an emphasis on institutional credibility over advocacy by volume.

DBRG's four-tier membership structure — comprising Principal Members, Member Banks, Contributing Members and Affiliate Members — reflects the actual composition of the UAE bullion market. Admission is conditional on a confidential compliance and KYC review prior to Board consideration, balancing data protection with effective oversight. Principal Members are established refiners and bullion trading houses; Member Banks are regulated by the Central Bank of the UAE, the DFSA or ADGM; Contributing Members supply essential services including logistics, technology, insurance and assaying; and Affiliate Members extend participation to smaller licensed operators, ensuring the Group remains representative of the whole industry rather than only its largest participants.

MOHAMMAD AYYOB is Chairman of the Dubai Business Group for Bullion and Gold Refinery (DBRG). A senior leader in the UAE precious metals industry, he is leading DBRG's efforts in bringing together refiners, traders, banks, and service providers under a unified industry platform. DBRG operates under Dubai Chambers as the representative industry body for the UAE bullion and refining sector.

CODE OF CONDUCT FIT FOR A GLOBAL HUB

In April 2026, DBRG adopted a binding Code of Conduct applicable to all members and officers. The Code sets expectations on integrity, regulatory compliance, transparency and professionalism, while explicitly anchoring obligations to UAE AML/CFT laws, sanctions requirements and responsible sourcing standards aligned with the OECD Due Diligence Guidance.

It introduces disclosure requirements covering politically exposed persons, conflicts of interest and material compliance events, alongside a formal investigation and disciplinary framework. Annual compliance declarations, signed by senior management, are intended to embed accountability into routine governance rather than treat it as an exception.

BUILDING BRIDGES: PARTNERSHIPS AND INITIATIVES

Over the past year, DBRG has formalised service partnerships with specialist providers, including AKW, Suntech, Orosoft and FinMet, across operational and compliance functions, while advancing engagement with bullion associations and peer bodies in key producing, refining and consuming markets.

The Group is also developing a structured programme of industry sessions and technical training focused on responsible sourcing, supply chain due diligence, regulatory engagement and compliance. Its digital platform, launched in April 2026, centralises onboarding, publications and consultations. A member advisory function, activated during recent regional disruptions affecting logistics, insurance and trade finance, has already demonstrated the value of coordinated engagement with Dubai Chambers and the Ministry of Economy.

THE ROAD AHEAD

The UAE's position in global bullion markets rests on trust, efficiency and connectivity in a highly entrepreneurial market. DBRG's role is to preserve these strengths as regulatory, geopolitical and market pressures increase. Priorities for the year ahead include broadening membership, deepening compliance culture, supporting global responsible sourcing initiatives and reinforcing Dubai's role as a convening centre for industry dialogue, including through partnerships such as the Dubai Precious Metals Conference.

Regional coordination will be central to that effort. DBRG intends to work closely with SBMA and peer associations on shared priorities: transparent benchmarks during Asian trading hours, interoperable Good Delivery standards, aligned responsible sourcing frameworks and deeper cross border liquidity in gold and silver. Through DBRG, the UAE aims to engage the region as a participant shaping market architecture, rather than as a passive conduit for flows.

The UAE's story in bullion is moving from scale to standards, and from standards to leadership. DBRG exists to ensure that journey is industry-led, globally aligned, and built to endure.

SBMA NEWS

By SBMA

Over the past quarter, the SBMA team has been preparing for the 9th Asia Pacific Precious Metals Conference. We would like to express our gratitude to our contributors and sponsors for their continued support for the APPMC, as well as their contributions to Crucible.

Here are the highlights of SBMA's activities from the past quarter :

MARCH, 2026: SBMA welcomed two new Local Associate Members in Q1 2026 with a membership certificate presentation held to mark the occasion. Abaxx Exchange's newly launched Abaxx Gold Singapore Futures Contract is bringing exciting developments to Asia's gold market.

From left: Russell Robertson, Chief Business Development Officer, Abaxx Exchange; Nacy Seah, Managing Director, Abaxx Exchange; Margaret Wong, Executive Director – Head of Operations; Albert Cheng, CEO, SBMA; Thomas Mchamon, Co-Founder, Abaxx Singapore Pte. Ltd.

Additionally, SBMA marked another milestone for the Association as Le Freeport joins as its first storage member. The membership certificate presentation was led by SBMA Honorary Treasurer Andrew Clarke and Executive Director – Head of Operations Margaret Wong.

From left: Margaret Wong, Executive Director – Head of Operations; Andrew Clarke, Head of Brink's Global Services – Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia & Brunei, Honorary Treasurer of SBMA; Lincoln Ng, CEO, Le Freeport Management Pte Ltd.

MARCH 27, 2026: More than 70 members and invited guests joined us at the SBMA biannual SBMA Members' Networking Event, where SBMA CEO Albert Cheng shared news of the joint press release by the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) and SBMA, setting out key focus areas to strengthen Singapore's position as a trusted gold trading centre serving the Asia-Pacific region. The focus areas were developed by a Gold Market Development Working Group that MAS and SBMA established in January 2026, building on detailed discussions and studies with industry participants in 2025. Visit the SBMA website for the full press release.

During the event, SBMA Chairman KL Yap also shared the encouraging news that the Association has reached an important milestone of 90 corporate members.

Group photo at the bi-annual SBMA Members' Networking Event.

UPCOMING EVENTS

July 6-10, 2026. China, Suzhou

Shanghai Platinum Week (SPW) 2026

SPW 2026 will be held at the Suzhou International Expo Centre. Registration is now open. For details, visit www.shanghaiplatinumweek.com. Join global PGM leaders for insights, networking, and innovation.

September 4-6, 2026. Vientiane, Laos

Lao Gold Festival

The second Lao Gold Festival will be held at the National Convention Centre in Vientiane, Laos. Email info@laobullionbank.com for registration and event details.

MEMBERSHIP

This quarter, SBMA welcomed BNP Paribas Singapore Branch and Mitsui Bussan Commodities (Singapore) Pte Ltd as Local Associate Corporate Members and CuiLu Jinye International Co., Ltd and Prism Gold HK Ltd as Foreign Associate.

As of June 2026, SBMA's total corporate membership now stands at 93 members, including 4 Category 1 members, 52 Local Associate Corporate members, 35 Foreign Associate Corporate members, and 3 Affiliate members.

About Crucible

Crucible is published quarterly by SBMA. If you would like to contribute an article, news or information, place an advertisement, or require further information, please contact:

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CLARIFICATION AND APOLOGY: CRUCIBLE ISSUE 38

The Singapore Bullion Market Association ("**SBMA**") wishes to clarify and apologise with respect to certain incorrect market statements previously published in its Crucible Issue 38.

Certain versions of Crucible Issue 38 previously contained articles which referred to certain vault operators and logistics providers as "LBMA-accredited", "LBMA-approved", or operating within an "LBMA-accredited supply chain", an "LBMA-only supply chain" or "LBMA-accredited vaults". Such labels or accreditations do not exist in Singapore, and elsewhere (to the best of the SBMA's knowledge), with respect to vault operators and logistics providers.

SBMA further clarifies that it did not intend to suggest that bullion held outside the Loco London chain of integrity, including bullion stored with local vault operators in Singapore, becomes stranded, unmarketable, or of diminished integrity by reason of that alone.

SBMA apologises unreservedly for these errors, is grateful to those who brought this matter to its attention, and remains committed to developing the Singapore bullion market.

For the London Bullion Market Association's own published statements on vaults, readers may refer to:
https://www.lbma.org.uk/market-standards/vaulting/vaults-best-practice-guidelines

https://www.lbma.org.uk/good-delivery/how-to-apply-for-good-delivery-accreditation

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Please see: https://sbma.org.sg/news/clarification-and-apology-crucible-issue-38/

30 October 2026