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Gold Hallmarking Phase 6: 380 Districts Now Covered as Mandatory Hallmarking Expands

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✎ WHY IN NEWS

With effect from **2 March 2026**, the Government of India added **seven new districts** in the **sixth phase of mandatory gold hallmarking**, bringing the total number of districts covered under compulsory gold hallmarking to **380 across the country**. The new districts are **Rupnagar (Punjab)**, **Banda (Uttar Pradesh)**, **Beed (Maharashtra)**, **Gomati (Tripura)**, **Katihar (Bihar)**, **Beawar (Rajasthan)**, and **Neemuch (Madhya Pradesh)**, under the Hallmarking Amendment Order 2026 issued by the **Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)**.

India is one of the world's largest consumers of gold — in 2024, India surpassed China to become the **largest consumer of gold jewellery** (563.4 tonnes), with total gold demand (jewellery + bars + coins) crossing **800 tonnes**. Gold jewellery is not merely a luxury product in India — it is a form of household savings, a ritual requirement at weddings and religious occasions, and a financial security asset held by families across income levels. When the purity of gold jewellery is misrepresented, it is not a consumer protection issue alone: it is a wealth-transfer problem that disproportionately affects middle-class and lower-middle-class buyers who cannot afford assay testing. Mandatory hallmarking is designed to prevent exactly this.

WHAT HALLMARKING IS AND WHY IT MATTERS

Hallmarking is the certification of the purity (fineness) of a precious metal article by an authorised assaying and hallmarking centre. For gold jewellery, BIS hallmarking certifies the exact gold content — expressed in karatage (22 karat, 18 karat, 14 karat) — after independent testing.

A hallmarked gold article carries a standardised mark that includes the **BIS logo**, the **purity/fineness mark** (e.g., 916 for 22K, 750 for 18K), the **assaying centre's identification**, and from 2021 onwards, a **six-digit alphanumeric Hallmark Unique Identification (HUID) code** traceable through the BIS Care App.

Without hallmarking, buyers of gold jewellery historically had no independent verification that what they were buying matched the purity claimed by the seller. Studies conducted by consumer organisations before hallmarking was mandatory found widespread under-carat gold — jewellery sold as 22K testing at 18K or lower — particularly in smaller markets outside metropolitan areas.

THE HISTORY OF GOLD HALLMARKING IN INDIA

BIS launched a **voluntary gold hallmarking scheme in 2000**, which had limited uptake. Adoption remained concentrated in large urban jewellers who already catered to quality-conscious buyers. The vast majority of India's gold jewellery market — comprising hundreds of thousands of small and medium jewellers — continued to operate without third-party purity verification.

The government announced the shift to **mandatory hallmarking in January 2020**, to be phased in district by district. Implementation was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the phased rollout began in **June 2021**.

The phasing approach was chosen because the mandatory hallmarking system requires a sufficient density of **Assaying and Hallmarking Centres (AHCs)** to make compliance practical for jewellers. Adding a district to mandatory coverage without adequate AHC infrastructure would simply force jewellers to travel to the nearest hallmarking centre in another city — imposing costs that would push smaller jewellers toward non-compliance.

THE PHASE-BY-PHASE EXPANSION

The rollout has proceeded in six phases:

Phase	Effective Date	Districts Added	Cumulative Total
Phase 1	23 June 2021	256	256
Phase 2	4 April 2022	32	288
Phase 3	8 September 2023	55	343
Phase 4	5 November 2024	18	361
Phase 5	31 July 2025	12	373
Phase 6	2 March 2026	7	380

India has approximately **766 districts** as per the 2011 Census (with some boundary changes since), meaning that as of March 2026, roughly half of India’s districts are under mandatory hallmarking.

WHAT HUID CHANGES

The introduction of the **Hallmark Unique Identification (HUID)** system in April 2021 was a significant digital upgrade to the hallmarking system. Each piece of hallmarked jewellery now carries a unique six-alphanumeric code that can be verified by consumers through the **BIS Care App** or the BIS website. The code retrieves the article’s registered purity, the AHC that tested it, and the jeweller who submitted it.

This system creates a **chain of accountability** that was absent from the earlier hallmarking regime, where the same BIS hallmark stamp could be duplicated or forged. HUID makes forgery significantly harder because each code is unique and registered in a central database.

WHERE MANDATORY HALLMARKING STILL FALLS SHORT

Despite six phases of expansion, significant gaps remain. Approximately half of India’s districts are still not under mandatory hallmarking. Within covered districts, small jewellers — those with annual turnover below a certain threshold — were initially given exemptions, though these have been progressively narrowed.

Awareness among buyers remains the weakest link. Consumer surveys suggest that even in covered districts, many gold buyers do not check the HUID code or understand the significance of the hallmark. The BIS Care App verification takes 30 seconds; most buyers do not perform it at the point of purchase.

Enforcement against non-compliant jewellers — who continue to sell unhallmarked gold in mandatory-coverage districts — is inconsistent. BIS and state-level consumer protection authorities conduct raids, but the market for unlicensed jewellery persists in smaller towns.

UPSC RELEVANCE

Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), Hallmark Unique Identification (HUID), BIS Act 2016, gold hallmarking phases, Assaying and Hallmarking Centres (AHCs), BIS Care App, Hallmarking Amendment Order 2026.

MAINS GS-3:

Consumer protection in India; standardisation and quality control; BIS role in the Indian economy; financial inclusion and household gold holdings.

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

PHASE 6 EXPANSION (2 MARCH 2026):

New districts added: 7

New districts: Rupnagar (Punjab), Banda (UP), Beed (Maharashtra), Gomati (Tripura), Katihar (Bihar), Beawar (Rajasthan), Neemuch (MP)

Total districts under mandatory hallmarking: 380

Total districts in India (approx.): ~766 (Census 2011 + subsequent additions)

Order: Hallmarking Amendment Order 2026

GOLD HALLMARKING IN INDIA — TIMELINE:

2000: BIS launches voluntary hallmarking scheme

January 2020: Government announces mandatory hallmarking

April 2021: HUID (Hallmark Unique Identification) system introduced

23 June 2021: Phase 1 — 256 districts

4 April 2022: Phase 2 — 288 districts (+32)

8 September 2023: Phase 3 — 343 districts (+55)

5 November 2024: Phase 4 — 361 districts (+18)

31 July 2025: Phase 5 — 373 districts (+12)

2 March 2026: Phase 6 — 380 districts (+7)

HUID SYSTEM:

Format: 6-alphanumeric code unique to each jewellery piece

Verification: BIS Care App or BIS website

Purpose: Prevents hallmark forgery; enables consumer verification at point of purchase

GOLD PURITY — SIX MANDATORY CARATAGES:

999 = 24 karat (pure gold — rarely used for jewellery)

958 = 23 karat

916 = 22 karat (most common for Indian gold jewellery)

833 = 20 karat

750 = 18 karat

585 = 14 karat

INDIA'S GOLD MARKET:

Total gold demand (2024): 802.8 tonnes — jewellery (563.4 tonnes) + bars/coins (239.4 tonnes)

2025 outlook: 700–800 tonnes (moderate from 2024 peak)

India overtook China as world's largest gold jewellery consumer in 2024

Governing body: Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), under **BIS Act, 2016** (notified 22 March 2016, effective 12 October 2017)

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

Unhallmarked gold historically showed widespread under-carat misrepresentation, especially in small-town markets

AHC (Assaying and Hallmarking Centre) density determines which districts can be covered — key constraint for expansion

BIS is under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution

Sources: [PIB](#), [BIS](#), [Ministry of Consumer Affairs](#)

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