

DAILY NEWS MONITOR: 5 JANUARY 2022

1. Omicron tally jumps to 2,135. List of worst-hit states here

Source: Livemint ([Link](#))

A total of 2,135 cases of Omicron variant of coronavirus have been detected across 24 states and UTs so far, out of which 828 have recovered or migrated, according to the Union health ministry data updated on 5 January. Maharashtra recorded the maximum number of 653 cases followed by Delhi at 464, Kerala 185, Rajasthan 174, Gujarat 154 and Tamil Nadu 121 cases. India saw a single-day rise of 58,097 new coronavirus infections, the highest in around 199 days, taking the country's total tally of cases to 3,50,18,358, while the active cases were recorded above 2 lakh after around 81 days, according to the data updated at 8 am.

2. Ambassador Atul Keshap appointed head of US-India Business Council

Source: Hindustan Times ([Link](#))

The US Chamber of Commerce said on 4 January ambassador Atul Keshap was being appointed as president of the US-India Business Council (USIBC) effective from January 5. Keshap most recently served in New Delhi as United States Chargé d’Affaires to India, leading the US Embassy team, it said in a statement. The Indian-origin Keshap has held a number of senior US government positions and is a 28-year veteran of the US Department of State.

3. Commerce ministry to launch Brand India Campaign to boost exports

Source: Financial Express ([Link](#))

With the country’s outbound shipments all set to cross USD 400 billion this fiscal year, the commerce ministry is planning to launch Brand India Campaign to give momentum to exports of both services and products in new markets, an official said. This campaign would serve as an “umbrella campaign” for promoting goods and services exported by India, the official said. In the initial stage, the campaign would focus on Indian exports in specific sectors such as gems and jewellery, textiles, plantation products (tea, coffee, spices), education, healthcare, pharma, and engineering. It would essentially focus on quality, heritage, technology, value, and innovation.

4. Vibrant Gujarat summit to go ahead as scheduled; Covid protocols in place

Source: Financial Express ([Link](#))

The Gujarat government will go ahead with the 10th edition of the Vibrant Gujarat Global Investor Summit (VGGIS) as scheduled, even as Covid-19 cases rise across the country. “VGGIS-2022 will take place as per its predetermined schedule. The Prime Minister will

inaugurate the three-day mega event on Monday, January 10. As far as Covid-19 precautions are concerned, all protocols will be followed,” a senior start government official said. The government has made RT-PCR tests mandatory for all foreign guests participating in the event physically at Mahatma Mandir, the venue for the summit. The health department has arranged for RT-PCR tests of VIP guests at UN Mehta hospital, the official said.

5. Govt making efforts to get duty concessions on textile via FTAs: Goyal

Source: Business Standard ([Link](#))

Union Minister Piyush Goyal on 4 January said the government is making efforts towards gaining access to new markets and getting concessional duties on textile products through free-trade agreements. Interacting with textiles associations, the Minister for Textiles and Commerce and Industry shared that in all the ongoing negotiations with major countries like the UK, the UAE, Canada, the European Union and Australia, there is a special focus on getting concessional duties for textile products. Goyal also thanked the prime minister for the decision to defer the increase of GST slab from five per cent to 12 per cent for the textiles sector while addressing the All India Textiles Association, according to an official statement. "He added that the requests of industry stakeholders were considered in present challenging times when the sector is on the path of recovery.

6. India spends record \$55.7 billion on gold imports in 2021: Report

Source: Business Standard ([Link](#))

India splurged a record \$55.7 billion on gold imports in 2021, buying more than double the previous year's tonnage as a price drop favoured retail buyers and pent up demand emerged for weddings that were delayed when the pandemic first hit. The previously unreported details of the world's second biggest consumer nation's soaring imports were disclosed to Reuters by a senior government official who requested anonymity as he was not authorised to speak to media. The 2021 gold import bill easily doubled the \$22 billion spent in 2020, and surpassed the previous high, set in 2011, of \$53.9 billion, according to the official, who tracks broad import trends. In volume terms, India imported 1,050 tonnes of gold in 2021, the most in a decade, and far more than 430 tonnes imported in 2020, the official said. While global bullion prices drew support from the strong demand in India, the outlay on imports would have added to pressure on the country's ailing rupee.