

Foreign Exchange Summary

as at January 29, 2021

Member State	USD	CAD	GBP	Euro
Bahamas (BSD)	1.00	0.78	1.37	1.21
Barbados (BBD)	2.03	1.59	2.80	2.48
Belize (BZD)	2.02	1.60	2.79	2.47
Guyana (GYD)	218.00	164.23	288.45	255.47
Haiti (HTG)	72.78	59.52	99.36	92.56
Jamaica * (JMD)	149.66	117.52	205.52	183.20
OECS (XCD)	2.71	2.13	3.69	3.29
Suriname (SRD)	14.29	11.08	19.62	17.34
T&T (TTD)	6.75	5.55	9.76	8.84

*Rates applicable for Customs & GCT purposes

Business News In Brief

Jamaica's revenues decline 15% in 9 months

Jamaica's Finance Minister Nigel Clarke has advised that revenues declined by \$72 billion or 15% for the first nine months of the 2020/21 fiscal year. Speaking in Parliament, Clarke noted that economic output is forecasted to decline precipitously this fiscal year, having declined by 18.4% in the first quarter and 10.7% in the second quarter. He noted that unemployment leapt from 7.3% in January of 2020 to more than 12% in July 2020 before improving to 10.4% in October last year. Minister Clarke pointed out that the government's debt stock as at April, 2020 was J\$2.087 trillion. As at December, 2020 the debt stock was J\$2.702 trillion. ([LOOP](#))

420 businesses close, 2,754 jobs lost to COVID in SVG

COVID-19 has resulted in the closure of 420 businesses in St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG), leading to a loss of 2,754 jobs across all sectors between March and December 2020. According to Finance Minister Camillo Gonsalves, "there are other employees who have not been laid off but put on reduced time schedules, particularly in the hospitality sector — reduced hours and the like, they are also receiving compensation through various income support measures." He also advised that the government has implemented several income support measures targeting these individuals. The approximate size of the labour force in SVG is 58 thousand persons. ([IWNSVG](#))

Barbados economy declines by 17.6% - Central Bank

Preliminary estimates are that Barbados contracted by 17.6% during 2020. The sharp fall reflected the combined effects of the severely diminished activity in the tourism sector, weaker than anticipated investment and reduced consumption arising from lower employment incomes and increased uncertainty. Despite an uptick in arrivals during the fourth quarter, visitor arrivals by way of airlift declined by 71% for 2020. Cruise arrivals declined by 64%. Revenues declined by 12% the result of lower collections of transaction-based taxes. VAT receipts fell by \$185 million and excise and import duties registered reductions of \$56 million and \$23 million, respectively. Nonetheless, Government registered a primary surplus of \$243 million, given a stronger than forecast improvement in corporate tax collections. The overall fiscal deficit was \$36 million or 0.4% of GDP for the first 9 months of the fiscal year. At year-end, Gross International Reserves stood at US\$2,661.9 million or 40.3 weeks of imports. ([BoB](#))

Corporate Movements

- ⇒ Caribbean Export Development Agency has appointed Deodat Maharaj as Executive Director effective February 1, 2021;
- ⇒ The Private Sector Organisation of Jamaica has appointed Imega Breese McNab as Executive Director effective January 18, 2021.

IMF - 16.2% contraction in Bahamas for 2020

Real GDP is projected to contract by 16.2% in 2020, followed by a modest rebound of 2% in 2021, and to converge back to its pre-pandemic level only by 2024. Unemployment for 2020 stands at 25.6% but average inflation declined by 0.2%. Those are some of the findings resulting from the Article IV consultations led by the IMF with the Bahamas. Public debt is expected to jump to almost 90% of GDP by 2021 and to remain more than 22 percentage points above its pre-pandemic level over the medium-term. According to the Fund, the banking sector remains well capitalized, but some banks and credit unions are vulnerable to pandemic induced risks, including an erosion of asset quality once loan moratoria expire, with negative implications for profitability and capital adequacy. Risks around the baseline are high, reflecting the uncertain evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic, and The Bahamas' vulnerability to natural disasters. ([IMF](#))

Stock Market Summary

as at January 29, 2021

Jamaica Stock Exchange

Overall Market activity resulted from trading in 44 stocks of which 19 advanced, 18 declined and 7 traded firm. Market volume amounted to 11,980,396 units valued at over J\$215,025,944.29. Wigton Windfarm Limited Ordinary Shares was volume leader with 2,288,966 units. Index advanced by 2,558.50 points to close at 387,937.83.

Jamaica Junior Stock Exchange

Overall market activity resulted from trading in 35 stocks of which 22 advanced, 9 declined and 5 traded firm. Market volume amounted to 5,251,635 units valued at over J\$13,479,011.76. Index closed at 2,774.17.

Barbados Stock Exchange (as at January 28)

1 security advanced, and 1 traded firm as 98,369 shares traded valued at \$401,613.20. Cave Shepherd & Company Ltd was volume leader trading 97,630 shares. Index closed at 2,447.73.

Trinidad & Tobago Stock Exchange

Overall Market activity resulted from trading in 18 securities of which 8 advanced, 5 declined and 5 traded firm. Trading activity on the First Tier Market registered a volume of 342,174 shares crossing the floor of the Exchange valued at TT\$2,199,365.49. GraceKennedy Ltd was volume leader with 140,000 shares changing hands for a value of TT\$546,000.00. The All T&T Index declined by 1.14 points to close at 1,770.64 and the Composite Index declined by 3.09 points to close at 1,328.97.

Guyana Stock Exchange

1 stock advanced and 3 traded firm as 870,382 units crossed the floor. Banks DIH (DIH) was volume leader with 865,362 shares traded. The LSI closed at 693.92.

Eastern Caribbean Securities Exchange (ECSE)

2 stocks traded with 3,797 units crossing the floor. Bank of St Vincent & the Grenadines traded 3,097 units.

CARICOM Business is a weekly newsletter produced by the Directorate of Trade & Economic Integration.

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Business News In Brief

European Parliament votes to expand blacklist

Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) have voted overwhelmingly in favour of adding more nations and territories to the list of non-cooperative jurisdictions or blacklist. By a vote of 587 to 50, the Parliament called for criterion to judge if a country's tax system is fair or not needs to be widened; that countries should not be removed from the blacklist if they only make symbolic tweaks; a 0% tax rate policy should automatically lead to being placed on the blacklist; and list has to be formalised through a legally binding instrument by end 2021. While also arguing for the inclusion of EU territories such as the Netherlands, Ireland and Malta, MEPs also placed emphasis on UK territories. In that regard, focus was placed on the Cayman Islands and British Virgin Islands among others. Despite the vote, any decision to expand the blacklist rests with the 27 member states on the EU's Economic and Financial Affairs Council.

[\(G\)](#) [\(CC\)](#) [\(EP\)](#) [\(NG\)](#)

News Highlights

- Review of Barbados' Economic Performance 2020
- Bahamas – Article IV Consultation 2020

Canada's main airlines to suspend service to Caribbean

Canada's main airlines Air Canada, WestJet, Sunwing and Air Transat, have agreed to cancel service to the Caribbean and Mexico and the federal government is introducing new mandatory quarantine rules. The suspension of flights is expected to end on April 30. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in making the announcement said as soon as possible the government will be introducing mandatory PCR testing at the airport for people returning to Canada, on top of the pre-boarding test already required. Travellers will then have to wait up to 3 days at an approved hotel for their test results, at their own expense, which Trudeau said is expected to be more than \$2 000. [\(NN\)](#)

International Oil Prices as at January 29, 2021

Futures	Price	US\$ Change	Change %
WTI Crude	US\$52.14	+0.05	+0.10
Brent Crude	US\$55.89	+0.46	+0.83
OPEC Basket	US\$54.36	-0.95	-1.72
Natural Gas	US\$2.56	-0.12	-4.48