

Foreign Exchange Summary

as at May 3, 2019

Member State	USD	CAD	GBP	Euro
Bahamas (BSD)	1.00	0.74	1.32	1.12
Barbados (BBD)	2.03	1.51	2.66	2.28
Belize (BZD)	2.02	1.51	2.65	2.27
Guyana (GYD)	210.45	156.18	273.68	234.72
Haiti (HTG)	86.28	64.64	114.61	97.32
Jamaica * (JMD)	136.14	101.22	177.01	150.48
OECS (XCD)	2.71	2.00	3.51	3.01
Suriname (SRD)	7.52	5.55	9.79	8.35
T&T (TTD)	6.79	5.30	9.33	8.12

*Rates applicable for Customs & GCT purposes

Business News In Brief

Jamaica now retaining 41 cents of the tourist dollar

Tourism Minister Edmund Bartlett has announced that Jamaica is now retaining nearly 41 cents of every dollar earned from tourism, up from 30 cents three years ago representing a 36% increase. Bartlett, said the new figure was provided by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC). “The latest review from the WTTC... indicates that Jamaica’s retention is now at 40.8 cents,” Bartlett added. The Minister pointed out that this performance is next to the Dominican Republic which has the highest level of retention at 50 cents, and way ahead of the Caribbean average which ranges from 10 to 30 cents. ([Loop Jamaica](#))

Higher credit demand and loan approvals in Bahamas

The second half of 2018 saw a rising demand for credit coupled with a slightly improved success rate in consumers credit, Central Bank of The Bahamas (CBOB) Governor John Rolle has said. According to latest CBOB survey, 23,879 loans were processed in the final six months of 2018, with an average approval rate of 81.8%. However, although loan volume expanded over the review period, the average loan values declined. Consumer loan applications dominated (92.4% of all loans), with approximately 82.7% approved. The survey further found that 39% of loans were denied due to a high debt service ratio whereas 29% were denied due to insufficient or no collateral. ([NG](#))

Virgin Atlantic takeover of LIAT?

The Cabinet of Antigua and Barbuda has indicated that Sir Richard Branson – of Virgin Atlantic – has shown interest in investing in the financially challenged sub-regional airline, LIAT. Discussions reportedly involved growing the airline out of its situation, with the hope that it would become a profit-making enterprise. According to the Cabinet notes, LIAT would have to enlarge its fleet and add other aircraft types. “The entrepreneur has proposed investing several million dollars. He would wet lease several aircraft, jets, and they would fly from Fort Lauderdale to Jamaica, Haiti and down into Antigua and Barbados, says Lionel Hurst, Chief of Staff, Office of the Prime Minister in Antigua “The whole idea is to enlarge LIAT, rather than collapse LIAT or making it a smaller entity.” This investment, would allow the air carrier to fly to destinations outside of the region.” Meanwhile, the government of Antigua and Barbuda has expressed its interest to purchase all shares held by the government of Barbados in LIAT. Hurst said Barbados has indicated that its shares in LIAT have been a burden on the country, which is currently going through an IMF restructuring program. ([AO](#))

Barbados economy on track

The Central Bank of Barbados is reporting an overall revenue yield of almost \$3 billion for the fiscal year ending March 31 with Gross International Reserves increasing by \$64 million to reach \$1.1 billion. Giving an update on the island’s economic performance, Central Bank Governor Cleviston Haynes reported a fiscal deficit of 0.3 % of GDP. This is exclusive of interest payments. The revenue intake for the fiscal year reached \$2.99 billion or 29.3% of GDP, of which \$933.1 million came during the 1st quarter of 2019. Total revenue intake for the fiscal year ending March 2018 was \$2.85 billion. “Taxes on incomes were buoyed by the improved performance of personal income taxes – \$482 million, and corporate taxes – \$356 million. Corporate income taxes benefited from the earnings of recently registered international business companies. Property tax receipts also grew, due in part to taxpayers taking advantage of the extension of the tax amnesty,” he reported. At the same time, Haynes said he was equally confident that government’s ambitious target of a primary surplus of 6% of GDP at the end of this fiscal year was achievable. The Central Bank is estimating economic growth to be between 0 and 0.25 per cent for 2019. ([BT](#))

Stock Market Summary

as at May 3, 2019

Jamaica Stock Exchange

Overall Market activity resulted from trading in 29 stocks of which 15 advanced, 11 declined and 3 traded firm. Market volume amounted to 3,479,279 units valued at over J\$204,145,954.13. NCB Financial Group Ltd was the volume leader with 1,033,816 units (29.71 %) traded. JSE Index advanced 2,562.47 points (0.63 %) to close at 407,877.42.

Barbados Stock Exchange

1 security advanced, 1 declined and 2 traded firm as 25,177 shares traded on the Regular Market, with a total value of \$79,337.83. Cave Shepherd and Company Limited was the volume leader trading 13,068 shares at \$4.44. Index closed at 3,231.19.

Trinidad & Tobago Stock Exchange

Overall Market activity resulted from trading in 18 securities of which 6 advanced, 5 declined and 7 traded firm. Trading activity on the First Tier Market registered a volume of 41,664 shares crossing the floor of the Exchange valued at TT\$666,489.01. Guardian Holdings Limited was the volume leader with 12,401 shares changing hands for a value of TT\$229,418.50. The All T&T Index advanced by 19.19 points (1.08%) to close at 1,791.79. The Composite Index advanced by 8.19 points (0.61%) to close at 1,346.38 and the Cross Listed Index declined by 0.42 points (0.34%) to close at 121.54 .

Guyana Stock Exchange

Market activity resulted from trading in 3 stocks of which 1 advanced and 2 traded firm. Market volume amounted to 165,863 units with Banks DIH (DIH) being volume leader with 160,179 shares traded. The LSI closed at 581.34.

Eastern Caribbean Securities Exchange (ECSE)

Market activity resulted from trading in 3 stocks with a market volume amounted to 67,754 shares. S L Horsford & Company Ltd was the volume leader trading 65,064 shares. Index closed at 149.59.

This newsletter is compiled & edited by the Directorate of Trade & Economic Integration at the CARICOM Secretariat only as a convenience for the Member States.

Business News In Brief

NCB seals the Guardian deal

After some 17-months of haggling with legislators & minority shareholders, NCB Financial Group (NCBFG) has now closed the offer to takeover regional insurance giant, Guardian Holdings Limited (GHL). NCBFG's success in the transaction comes a day earlier than its fourth extension of May 3, 2019 to acquire up to 74,230,750 shares in GHL. A notice sent out by the Group on May 2, 2019 said that the latest tally of GHL shares deposited by GHL shareholders in response to the Offer was approximately 118,517,936 which, together with the NCBFG's existing shareholding in GHL, represents approximately 81.07% of the outstanding GHL shares. However, NCB intends to grow its stake in Trinidad and Tobago-based insurance company to 62 %. At the enhanced price of US\$2.79 per share, total consideration to be paid by NCBFG is US\$207,103,792.50. The Jamaican banking conglomerate expects to pay for the taken-up shares within 10 days of the extended closing date, that is, by the May 13, 2019. [\(JO\)](#)

Controversial front of packaging labelling sparks debate

A regional standard for the labelling of pre-packaged foods is currently being revised, and is being led by the CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ) – the regional standards development body. According to the Bureau of Standards (BSJ) Jamaica this is a routine part of the process, consultation is undertaken in each member state, led by its National Standards Body. In the current review of the draft regional labelling standard, concern has been expressed by some stakeholders about the front of package labelling (FOPL) and the implications for industry. These concerns/responses from the stakeholders were submitted to the CROSQ Secretariat for discussion by the Regional Technical Committee, which will have responsibility for addressing the comments received.” said a BSJ release. A meeting of the committee is scheduled for May 14 to 15 in Suriname. [\(JO\)](#)

International Oil Prices as at May 3, 2019

Futures	Price	US\$ Change	Change
WTI Crude	US\$61.94	+0.13	+0.21%
Brent Crude	US\$70.85	+0.10	+0.14%
OPEC Basket	US\$70.98	-1.02	-1.42%
Natural Gas	US\$2.567	-0.022	-0.85%