

## Foreign Exchange Summary

as at December 18, 2020

Member State	USD	CAD	GBP	Euro
Bahamas (BSD)	1.00	0.78	1.35	1.23
Barbados (BBD)	2.03	1.60	2.78	2.50
Belize (BZD)	2.02	1.59	2.74	2.49
Guyana (GYD)	218.00	164.97	284.89	258.02
Haiti (HTG)	70.44	56.03	95.35	87.44
Jamaica * (JMD)	144.25	111.87	194.27	178.62
OECS (XCD)	2.71	2.13	3.67	3.30
Suriname (SRD)	14.29	11.07	19.29	17.52
T&T (TTD)	6.80	5.68	9.79	9.01

\*Rates applicable for Customs & GCT purposes

### Business News In Brief

#### Internet access to be declared a public good in Jamaica

The Government of Jamaica is to roll out a broadband expansion programme, dubbed the National Broadband Initiative, which will seek to provide Internet connection to every household by 2025. According to Minister of Science, Energy and Technology, Daryl Vaz, the Government will make access to the Internet a public good. The objectives of the initiative are to: achieve universal access; boost adoption and usage; improve quality and coverage of key services such as health and education and more broadly public services; and guarantee affordability. [\(JO\)](#)

#### Trinidad removes all taxes from computer equipment

Effective January 1, 2021, the Trinidad and Tobago will remove all taxes from laptop computers, notebook computers, tablet computers (tariff heading 8471.30.00), mobile and digital equipment, cell phones, software, accessories & peripherals (tariff heading 8517.12.10). This has been occasioned by the passage of the Finance Bill 2020 in the House of Representatives on December 11 & the Senate on December 15 and featured amendments to Schedule 2 of the Value Added Tax Act to allow for zero rating, to the Miscellaneous Taxes Act, Chap. 77:01 to allow for exemption from the payment of online purchase tax & to Part A of the Second Schedule of the Customs Act, Chap. 78:01 to allow for exemption from the payment of customs duty. [\(TTP\)](#)

#### Bahamas: Private sector loan arrears up nearly 10 percent

Private sector loan arrears grew nearly 10% between July and September, which the Central Bank of The Bahamas indicated led to a contraction in the profitability of the banking sector. owing primarily to a rise in provisioning for bad debt. Those loan arrears grew by \$61.4 M or 9.7%, pushing the ratio of arrears to loans in that category up more than a percentage point. The Central Bank also stated that private sector loan arrears are still down 7% compared to the same period last year. Consumer loan arrears grew by \$50.7 M, representing a 28.6% increase, while commercial arrears grew by \$8.5 M or 13.9%. The non-performing loan rate on consumer loans grew from 5.5% in the 2nd quarter to 6.1% in the 3rd quarter, however mortgages remained the same, the regulator noted. Short-term (31-90 day) arrears rose by 18.3% to \$232.1 M, translating to 4.1% of total private sector loans. [\(NG\)](#)

#### Corporate Movements

- ⇒ Finance Minister, Hon. Colm Imbert has announced the appointment of Dr Dorian Noel as Deputy Governor, Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago;
- ⇒ Carreras Limited (CAR) has appointed Andre Pryce as the Trade Marketing and Distribution Manager, effective January 1, 2021.

#### Barbados: IDB provides US\$30 million boost to MSME sector

Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in Barbados are to get a \$60 million (US\$30 million) boost to help maintain jobs, the IDB has announced. According to the Bank, the purpose of the loan, is to help the affected MSMEs to overcome temporary liquidity problems, protect jobs “and at the same time, allow business continuity and operations”. The IDB said: “Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the economy contracted 14.9% in the first semester of 2020 and the expected outlook for 2020 is a 11.6% contraction.” With MSMEs making up about 96.3% of formal businesses in Barbados, the IDB said a large majority were micro and small-size, accounting for 45.3% and 46.9% respectively. Medium-sized firms, having between 26 and 50 workers, account for 4.1% of firms. Stressing the importance of MSMEs to the economy, the IDB said these businesses contributed about 64.1% of the national added value and accounts for approximately 60.7% of Barbadian jobs. The US\$30 million IDB loan will go towards a programme to support credit guarantees for individual investment loans to be undertaken by eligible MSMEs. [\(BT\)](#)

## Stock Market Summary

as at December 18, 2020

### Jamaica Stock Exchange

Overall Market activity resulted from trading in 40 stocks of which 20 advanced, 18 declined and 8 traded firm. Market volume amounted to 37,661,093 units valued at over J\$245,318,135.47. Wigton Windfarm Ltd Ordinary Shares was volume leader with 13,411,442 units. Index declined by 658.11 points to close at 387,995.08.

### Jamaica Junior Stock Exchange

Overall market activity resulted from trading in 40 stocks of which 28 advanced, 10 declined and 2 traded firm. Market volume amounted to 45,521,469 units valued at over J\$117,540,297.23. Index closed at 2,573.05.

### Barbados Stock Exchange

1 security advanced, 2 declined and 1 traded firm as 6,048 shares traded with a total value of \$25,212.25. One Caribbean Media Ltd. was the volume leader trading 3,139 shares. Index closed at 2,598.80.

### Trinidad & Tobago Stock Exchange

Overall Market activity resulted from trading in 18 securities of which 6 advanced, 6 declined and 6 traded firm. Trading activity on the First Tier Market registered a volume of 285,091 shares crossing the floor of the Exchange valued at TT\$2,217,254.10. JMMB Group Limited was volume leader with 120,000 shares changing hands for a value of TT\$239,210.40. The All T&T Index advanced by 1.90 points to close at 1745.05 and the Composite Index declined by 1.08 points to close at 1,317.51.

### Guyana Stock Exchange

2 stocks advanced and 3 traded firm as 662,937 units crossed the floor. Banks DIH (DIH) was volume leader with 605,594 shares traded. The LSI closed at 690.47.

### Eastern Caribbean Securities Exchange (ECSE)

3,193 shares traded. Grenada Co-operative Bank Ltd was volume leader with 1,700 units. Index closed at 146.47.

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## Business News In Brief

### St Kitts and Nevis set to introduce unemployment insurance

St Kitts and Nevis (SKN) is considering draft legislation from the St. Christopher and Nevis Social Security Board that proposes the establishment of an Unemployment Insurance Fund. Minister of Labour, Wendy Phipps in welcoming the initiative noted that “in 2021, it is a matter that will be pursued by the Ministry and the tripartite committee so that persons who would have lost their jobs and would have been out of work for 90 days would be eligible to claim from the fund,” said Mrs. Phipps. “The claimant must actively demonstrate that he/she is seeking employment as “it is not intended for you to remain on it for the rest of your life.” ([O](#))

### News Highlights

- [Preliminary Overview of the Economies of LAC 2020](#)
- [The Bahamas: Fiscal Strategy Report 2020](#)

### Jamaica has import coverage of 1 year in FE reserves

The Bank of Jamaica (BOJ) had US\$2.96 billion in net international reserves, an amount which represents 51.99 weeks of goods imports, as at November 30. The Central Bank’s total foreign assets as at November 30 were US\$3.93 billion which is US\$72 M more than October 2020. Liabilities at November month-end comprised US\$969.56 M for the International Monetary Fund, up US\$3.25 M over October. Gross reserves at end-October amounted to approximately US\$3.9 billion, representing 116.2% of the Assessing Reserve Adequacy metric for FY2020/21. The Government of Jamaica is targeting NIR levels of \$2.4 billion at fiscal year-end March 2021. The Central Bank has also confirmed the resiliency of the financial system. Both the primary ratio and capital adequacy ratio, which measures the capacity of banks to absorb unexpected losses, remained comfortably above their respective statutory minima. All banks have also remained very liquid, reporting Liquidity Coverage Ratios in excess of 100% at end-September. ([CBR](#))

### International Oil Prices as at December 18, 2020

Futures	Price	US\$ Change	Change %
WTI Crude	US\$49.08	+0.68	+1.40
Brent Crude	US\$52.37	+0.87	+1.69
OPEC Basket	US\$50.78	+0.66	+1.32
Natural Gas	US\$2.71	+0.06	+2.26