

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

# POINTEXPRESS

TRUSTED NEWS AND RESPECTED VIEWS

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PRICE \$3

# POST-COVID PLANNING BEGINS

Story on Page 3

*Page 4 - New IDC is state-of-the-art*



# Cuba-based students may be coming home

The head of the Prime Minister's Scholarship Programme says the committee is examining the possibility of bringing home Antiguan and Barbudan students residing in Cuba.

In response to inquiries from PointeXpress newspaper, Maurice Merchant replied by saying that his committee is awaiting a response from the Cuban authorities on information regarding the school term, students grades and resumption of classes before a decision is made.

Currently 73 students are studying in Cuba in various disciplines.

However, reports are only 16 have

indicated their desire to return home.

Classes in Cuba are uninterrupted and examinations are scheduled for May and June.

Cuba has 1,501 positive cases of COVID-19. 681 people have recovered and 61 people have died.

Last week, a batch of Antiguan and Barbudan students studying in Jamaica returned on a chartered flight and is currently in quarantine in a government facility.

In related news, the National Student Loan Fund (NSLF) Committee said it is aware that some of its loan recipients have been impacted by

the economic crisis that has resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this regard, the affected loan recipients are encouraged to contact the NSLF Secretariat to notify it of the challenges that they are facing with regard to servicing their student loan.

Additionally, it said due to prolonged uncertainties related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the NSFL advises that, effective immediately; the 2020/2021 loan application period has been suspended until some degree of operational normalcy is restored.

## DAY 5/1

Max UV Index: 11 Extreme  
Wind: E at 32 km/h  
Wind Gusts: 39 km/h  
Probability of Precipitation: 65%  
Probability of Thunderstorms: 20%  
Precipitation: 3.9 mm  
Rain: 3.9 mm  
Snow: 0.0 cm  
Ice: 0.0 mm  
Hours of Precipitation: 2  
Hours of Rain: 2

# 30°<sub>Hi</sub>



Partly sunny and breezy with a couple of showers

## NIGHT 5/1

Wind: ESE at 18 km/h  
Wind Gusts: 32 km/h  
Probability of Precipitation: 25%  
Probability of Thunderstorms: 0%  
Precipitation: 0.0 mm  
Rain: 0.0 mm  
Snow: 0.0 cm  
Ice: 0.0 mm

# 25°<sub>Lo</sub>



Mainly clear

## SUNRISE/SUNSET

Sunrise AST  
5:41AM

Sunset AST  
6:27PM



Duration  
12:46hr

## MOONRISE/MOONSET

Moonrise AST  
12:50 PM

Moonset AST  
2:20AM



Duration  
13:10hr

## Economic Recovery Committee Meets

The Economic Recovery Committee (ERC) set up by the government to plan the nation's strategies post-COVID-19, held its first virtual meeting on Thursday. And according to Chief of Staff in the Office of the Prime Minister, Lionel Max Hurst, all the organisations invited to name representatives were duly represented.

However, Leader of the Opposition, Jamale Pringle, was a 'no show'. There were two additions to the meeting; former finance minister in the UPP Administration, Dr. Errol Cort and businessman, Victor Michael, of First Choice supermarket. They attended at the invitation of the prime minister to share their expertise with the committee.

Chaired by Prime Minister, Gaston Browne, the meeting received proposals/recommendations from each of the

entities representing their particular interest. Following each presentation, the prime minister led the discussion that followed.


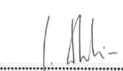
"Each speaker had a special interest, so for example, the Antigua Trades and Labour Union (AT&LU), which represents public sector workers, wanted a reform of the public sector. However, it did not want the reform to come at the expense of jobs in the public service," Hurst explained. In response, PM Browne gave a commitment that the government will do all it can to preserve public sector jobs, 'unless the situation doesn't worsen precipitously with the lockdown in the United States and Europe', the source market for tourists coming into Antigua and Barbuda. The bankers' representative noted that as a group, they had extended loans to the government as

well as a number of companies and have also put in place moratoria as a form of assistance to these entities.

According to Hurst no one commented on the absence of the leader of the opposition at the meeting. General Secretary of the Antigua and Barbuda Workers' Union, David Massiah, was there representing hotel and private sector workers.

Hurst described the ERC as a Think Tank that generates its own ideas, but also receives ideas from each of its several committees. He could not provide specific dates when the several subcommittees will meet. "Each subcommittee has been given a fair amount of autonomy to carry out its mandate. Their findings and recommendations will be submitted to the ERC," Hurst noted.

The next meeting of the ERC takes place next Thursday.

TOLOMEO BANK LIMITED				
Statement of Financial Position				
December 31, 2019				
(Expressed in United States Dollars)				
	Notes	2019	2018	
<b>Assets</b>				
Cash		\$ 2,848	1,804	
Due from banks	9	26,919,201	53,449,125	
Derivative financial instruments	10	3,546,224	1,736,135	
Due from customers		201,701	989,114	
Investments	11	2,503,492	5,810,370	
Other assets	12	567,664	577,086	
Property, equipment and right of use assets net	13	98,008	84,360	
<b>Total Assets</b>		<b>\$ 33,839,138</b>	<b>62,647,994</b>	
<b>Liabilities and Shareholder's Equity</b>				
<b>Liabilities:</b>				
Due to banks	14	\$ 8	740,041	
Lease liabilities		123,118	-	
Derivative financial instruments	10	3,522,125	1,674,288	
Due to customers	14	25,284,778	56,018,224	
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	15	355,621	244,467	
Tax payable		28,678	17,216	
<b>Total Liabilities</b>		<b>\$ 29,314,328</b>	<b>58,694,236</b>	
<b>Shareholder's Equity:</b>				
Share capital	16	\$ 3,000,000	3,000,000	
General reserves	17	606,526	381,526	
Contributed capital	18	40,025	40,025	
Retained earnings		878,259	532,207	
<b>Total Shareholder's Equity</b>		<b>\$ 4,524,810</b>	<b>3,953,758</b>	
<b>Total Liabilities and Shareholder's Equity</b>		<b>\$ 33,839,138</b>	<b>62,647,994</b>	
Approved by the Board and signed on its behalf by:				
Director			Director	

TOLOMEO BANK LIMITED				
Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income				
For the year ended December 31, 2019				
(Expressed in United States Dollars)				
	Notes	2019	2018	
<b>Income:</b>				
Interest and similar income	19	\$ 183,432	391,074	
Interest and similar expense	20	(20,568)	(135,177)	
<b>Net interest income</b>		<b>162,864</b>	<b>255,897</b>	
Fee and commission income	21	3,910,060	4,586,369	
Fee and commission expense	22	(1,149,365)	(1,856,741)	
<b>Net fee and commission income</b>		<b>2,760,695</b>	<b>2,729,628</b>	
Net gain on financial assets designated at fair value through profit or loss	24	107,210	6,371	
Net Foreign exchange gain	24	725,697	508,723	
Other operating income		66,085	10,337	
<b>Total Operating Income</b>		<b>3,822,551</b>	<b>3,510,956</b>	
Personnel expenses	26	(967,942)	(967,123)	
General office and administrative expenses	25	(1,723,971)	(1,855,216)	
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>		<b>(2,691,913)</b>	<b>(2,822,339)</b>	
<b>Net income for the year</b>		<b>1,130,638</b>	<b>688,617</b>	
<b>Taxation</b>		<b>(28,678)</b>	<b>(17,216)</b>	
<b>Net profit after taxes</b>		<b>\$ 1,101,960</b>	<b>671,401</b>	
The notes on pages 7 to 52 are an integral part of these financial statements.				
4				



# Minister takes media on tour of new Infectious Disease Center

The beds have been described as very costly and the equipment state-of-art as Health Minister Molwyn Joseph hosted local media representatives on a tour of the newly opened Infectious Disease Control Center (IDC) at the Holberton Hospital.

"All 17 rooms are equipped with the Oxygen Medical Air and MedVac, which is the suction," Minister Joseph explained to the press entourage as he showed them around the facility which officially blessed during a small ceremony earlier in the week.

He was referring to equipment which maintains the optimal level of air pressure and oxygenation in the rooms for treating critically ill patients, while facilitating an exchange of air with the outside so that the transmission of dangerous particles or biological agents is prevented.



As he showed the nurses' station which is equipped to remotely monitor patients without the need for on-the-spot physical presence or contact, Minister Joseph said the number of



nurses and doctors stationed in the IDC at any given time would depend on the number and condition of the patients being treated there.

*cont'd on pg 5*





# National Assessment cancelled by ministry

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology has made public the method of placement for Grade 6 students who will enter secondary schools at the start of the new school year.

This new development comes as all national assessments, Grades 2, 4 and 6 were cancelled.

In a statement, the Ministry of Education detailed the Grades 2 and 4 assessments, routinely held at the end of May, are formative in nature and administered chiefly for developmental reasons. The Grade 6 National Assessment customarily set for the beginning of June, is the final evaluation for primary school students at the Grade 6 level entering the secondary school system and it is principally for placement purposes.

In the absence of the national assessment, Grade 6 students will be assigned and offered placements in public sec-

ondary schools using data generated at the school-level from continuous in-school assessments, particularly, class work, homework, projects and tests.

Placements will be carried out using a three-pronged method.

**Outstanding Achiever Placement (OAP):** Outstanding achievers will be offered placements at Antigua Girls High School, Antigua Grammar School, or any other preferred public secondary school (on availability of space) based on his/her ranked performance at the primary school level. Schools will rank each Grade 6 student based on his/her performance in Term 1 and mid-term of Term 2 and submit information to the Measurement & Evaluation Unit.

Students, who are not in Outstanding Achiever Placement, will be assigned in Place of Residence Placement (PRP): Students will be assigned

placement in a public secondary school nearest their place of residence and with available space. There will also be Special Educational Needs Placement (SENP): Students with special educational needs will be assigned to the public school best suited to meet their special educational requirements.

Schools with 29 or more 6th graders will select 8 students, males and females, for the Outstanding Achiever Placement, while schools with 15-28, will select 6 students for the category. Those students with grade six students less than 15 will select 2 students for the OAP.

Cabinet has agreed that schools will remain closed, although the decision will be reviewed next week when Cabinet reconvenes.

Eighteen thousand students are at home at this time because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

*cont'd from pg 4*

"If it's one patient, my understanding is that you have two nurses per shift, and the shifts are four hours. So, if there are four patients [there will be] eight nurses ... Some nurses will take up residence here, but since there are no patients now, the nurses will be at Mount St. John's. But assuming that we have patients here, all the nurses who work here will remain here," he elaborated.

The IDC is also going to be outfitted shortly with an oxygen generating plant where the vital gas is produced and bottled for stor-



age or piped directly to patient bedside as required – all right on site.

While the construction of the IDC was spurred by the current COVID-19 global pandemic, the facility will cater for any other infectious disease outbreak that requires isolation or special

care, apart from, or in addition to, the regular public healthcare institutions such as the Mount St. John's Medical Center.

For that matter, the IDC has been designated a ward of MSJMC.

Asked what he considered to have been the most



difficult part of retrofitting the old building, Minister Joseph hinted that redoing the electrical wiring and plumbing were largely responsible for the extended time it took to complete the IDC.



## Local business makes another donation

A local business entity is making another donation of food and other supplies to a government department.

The latest donation from Billy's Food-mart was made on Thursday to the men and women assigned to the Langford's Police Station.

"We presented 21 cases of product donated to the Division. Since our corporate headquarters are located in the area (Friar's Hill Road) therefore we see this as bringing charity to home

first," marketing consultant Neil Cochrane stated.

He noted that this is one second donation that the company has made over the past several weeks.

"Being a good corporate citizen in these challenging economic times is why we felt motivated to make this presentation," he added.

Additionally, the Billy's Food-mart spokesman said the company is very much aware and is appreciative of the work being done by the people in the frontline,

especially the police, who risk their lives by exposing themselves to ensure the nation's safety. "The government cannot do it alone," he declared.

Also present at the brief ceremony were the com-

pany's managing director, Leslie Salmon and Superintendent Vivian Parker who accepted the donations on behalf of the station.

The items donated include oats, sardines, corned beef, crackers and toilet paper.

## 101 Not Out!

An Antigua and Barbuda citizen, who now resides in the United Kingdom, is celebrating her 101st birthday today.

Rebecca "Vionie" Nathaniel was born in Freetown village on May 1, 1919. Vionie, as she is affectionately known, migrated to London in her early 40's.

She is the mother of eight children and seventeen grandchildren. She credits her longevity to her love for God and her grateful family.



Nathaniel returned to Antigua last year to celebrate her 100th birthday with family members from Freetown and neighbouring communities.



## SPECIAL SERVICE DAY FOR VULNERABLE CUSTOMERS

APUA is pleased to continue priority access to our respected and vulnerable customers.

This will occur every **Tuesday** until further notice, where we will only serve:

- Senior citizens age 60 and over
- Persons with disabilities or physically challenged
- Expectant Mothers

All other customers are asked to acknowledge this day as being dedicated to the above mentioned groups and are asked to please defer any business with the Authority to Mondays and Wednesdays through to Fridays.

APUA extends gratitude to its customers for their understanding during this time.

APUA reserves the right to change and/or suspend without prior notice.





## Jarvis to join observers in Guyana

Veteran elections officer John Jarvis has been approached by CARICOM to form part of a high-level CARICOM delegation that will observe the recount of regional and national elections votes in Guyana.

Jarvis confirmed he was contacted by CARICOM Secretary General, Irwin LaRocque, to serve and he has accepted. However, the details surrounding his departure and the period wherein which the recount of votes will take place are yet to be finalized.

In a brief interview, John Jarvis said he agreed to serve "for the sake of the region."

John Jarvis serves as a Commissioner on the Antigua and Barbuda Electoral Commission (ABEC) and in the past has served as Returning Officer for Barbuda and is experienced in the



*Elections officer John Jarvis*

workings of Caribbean Elections.


On March 2nd, he was part of the CARICOM Observer Mission to Guyana, his 3rd election in that country, representing the same organization.


A winner of the March 2nd regional and general election in Guyana is yet

to be determined and the two main political parties have been embroiled in legal battles over claims of vote rigging.

The CARICOM high level delegation will not have a hands-on role in the recount of votes. It will be there to merely observe the process.

Earlier this month, Guyana's Court of Appeal ruled the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) cannot farm out its responsibilities such as the management and supervision of general elections to anyone else. President of the Court, Justice Dawn Gregory said GECOM's decision to act on an agreement by President David Granger and Opposition Leader Bharrat Jagdeo for the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to supervise the recount was illegal.





### NSLF Loan Application Period

Due to prolonged uncertainties related to the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic, the National Student Loan Fund advises that, effective immediately, the 2020/2021 loan application period has been suspended until some degree of operational normalcy is restored.

The education of the citizens of Antigua and Barbuda remains a top priority for the Fund and we will continue to work together to build a brighter future for our nation.

Do continue to adhere to the regulations and protocols mandated by the Government and play your part in controlling the spread of the Corona virus by practicing social distancing.

While the NSLF Secretariat remains closed to the public at this time, you can still reach us via [nslf@ab.gov.ag](mailto:nslf@ab.gov.ag).

Stay safe!





### Message To NSLF Loan Recipients

The National Student Loan Fund (NSLF) Committee is aware that some of our loan recipients have been impacted by the economic crisis that has resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic. In this regard, the affected loan recipients are encouraged to contact the NSLF Secretariat to notify us of the challenges that they are facing with regard to servicing their student loan.

You should be aware that clause 10.3 of your student loan agreement states:

*"The Student and the sureties shall immediately notify the Committee of anything that may affect the student's ability to fulfill his/her commitments made under this Agreement"*

The purpose of this provision is to ensure that where loan recipients experience challenges in meeting their loan commitments, the NSLF is notified and arrangements made for the appropriate management of the loan account.

Please be advised that once you are able to demonstrate that your ability to service your loan has been affected by the fallout from COVID-19, no late fees or penalties will be applied to your loan account.

We trust that you are making every effort to adhere to the regulations and protocols mandated by the Government and encourage you to play your part in controlling the spread of the Corona virus by practicing social distancing.

While the NSLF Secretariat remains closed to the public at this time, you can still reach us via [nslf@ab.gov.ag](mailto:nslf@ab.gov.ag).

Stay safe!

# Public education to counter 5G misinformation – Minister Nicholas

Antigua and Barbuda will not be dissuaded from allowing Fifth Generation or 5G technology to be deployed and utilized here, once it passes established regulatory requirements.

Further, Government's main spokesman has made clear that any wariness or refusal of 5G will not be the result of widespread claims by conspiracy theorists that the currently most advanced wireless telephony rollout is somehow linked to the COVID-19 coronavirus.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Melford Nicholas made the point at this week's post-Cabinet press briefing.

He was asked whether the COVID-5G allegations (which have persisted de-

spite being repeatedly debunked by medical and other scientific experts around the world) might cause Antigua and Barbuda to hesitate to pursue that particular technology upgrade as part of its development and modernization goals

Nicholas, who also holds the portfolios for Telecommunications and Information Technology, does not think so.

"I think education is key. I have been part of several forums, including the Caribbean Telecommunication Union (CTU) of which I am the current president. The CTU has issued public statements to that effect. The Caribbean Association of National Telecommunications Operators (CANTO) have

also issued a statement. The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) has also issued statements – all indicating that there is no scientific relationship between the COVID pandemic and the implementation of 5G," he stated.

The Minister referenced the South American and CARICOM State of Suriname, which he visited last year as part of a CTU delegation. "More than 80 percent of their broadband network utilizes 5G ... If there was any relationship between 5G and COVID, then the statistics in terms of the level of infection in Suriname should at least be imitating what is taking place in France and Spain and Wuhan ... But that is

certainly not the case."

He however noted that if the public's mind has been prejudiced by the claims, then "clearly it would be a sensible thing to engage in public education to try and [allay] whatever fears and concerns people may have before going forward.

"So yes, there is some fear, and I think just like we have done here and collaborated as media professionals, as media houses in bringing up to date cogent, relevant and factual information to the public, to assist the public in overcoming the fears associated with this pandemic, we have done a wonderful job ...

"So I am satisfied that where it's going to be necessary for any of these undertakings to take place and public education is going to be necessary that we are well equipped and the public will respond appropriately and accordingly."

It was only last week that the country's three mobile telephone service providers issued a rare and perhaps unprecedented joint statement stressing that there was no 5G deployed in Antigua and Barbuda.

Private firms Digicel and Flow, along with the state-owned APUA-Inet, also urged the public not to buy into what they termed "the misinformation linking 5G to coronavirus".



For the **safety** of employee drivers,  
their families and the communities in which they **live** and **work**.

**Sanitize** frequently touched surfaces within  
your vehicle on a regular basis to avoid  
potential contamination, especially if the  
vehicle is shared/used by others.

**COVID-19: Driver Safety Tips**

**ATB**  
ANTIGUA & BARBUDA TRANSPORT BOARD  
A Message from Antigua and Barbuda Transport Board

**SANITIZE**  
DESINFECTAR

**DRIVE SAFELY**



## Lady Afaf Hadeed has died

One of Antigua and Barbuda's most prominent families, the Hadeed Family, has lost its matriarch, with the death this week of Lady Afaf Hadeed.

Lady Afaf was the wife of Sir Ramez Hadeed, one of the longest serving diplomats in the history of Antigua and Barbuda, having served multiple administrations.

She died in a Miami hospital early Wednesday morning where she was undergoing treatment for cancer. Sir Ramez was at her bedside when she passed. They had been married for some 52 years.

Managing Director of the Hadeed Group of Companies, Francis Hadeed, who was like a son to Lady Afaf, said he is deeply shaken by her passing. He added that he spoke with her the day before and that she seemed in good spirit and the news of her passing came as a 'shock'.

Foreign Affairs Minister, Chet Greene, dispatched a letter to Sir Ramez extending condolences on behalf of the government and the entire diplomatic corps of Antigua and Barbuda.

"The loss of a loved one is never easy, but it is our earnest hope that the beautiful



memories you have shared with her would remind you of the blessing she was," the letter stated.

Permanent Secretary in the ministry, Anthony Liverpool, said he had the good fortune to travel with Sir Ramez and Lady Afaf to several meetings of the United Nations General Assembly. "I have found her to be a very strong, yet a very pleasant and caring person. She was also a tremendous support to Sir Ramez in his career as a diplomat," he noted.

Former General Manager of Finance and Development Company Ltd., Eustace Gonsalves, who worked alongside Sir Ramez for close to forty years, described Lady Afaf as 'a wonderful human being'... one who was always willing to assist anyone in need.

There's no immediate information of when the funeral will take place.

## In Memoriam

GOVERNOR GENERAL HIS EXCELLENCY

**Sir Rodney Williams**

**EXTENDS MESSAGE  
OF CONDOLENCE**

**TO THE FAMILY OF  
MR. TIMOTHY PAYNE**



The sudden passing of Mr. Timothy Payne has come as a shock to the nation. His contribution in the fields of journalism, community development, education, heritage and culture is noteworthy. Mr. Payne was passionate about the restoration of the Barnes Hill Reservoir and had it not been for the COVID 19 Curfew would have launched two books and a historic photographic presentation at this location which was dear to his heart. The books, *A New Biography on King Short Shirt*, celebrate the life and times of calypso icon, Sir McLean Emmanuel and *Village Life and More* is a collection of humorous anecdotes. Timothy shared his view of life through the lens of his camera and produced many memorable photos of Antiguan and Barbudan life. In addition to his well known local exhibitions, his work was featured in the largest non commercial, six month long, art exhibition the Venice Biennale in Venice, Italy. His positive energy and commitment to our nation's development was an inspiration to many. He will be greatly missed.

On behalf of Lady Williams and my entire family, I extend sincerest condolences to the Payne family on the passing of their loved one and our family friend, Timothy, Anderson Payne.

May God grant you all comfort in this your time of bereavement.

**Sir Rodney Williams GCMG, KGN, KSt.J, MBBS, PhD(h.c)**  
Governor General of Antigua and Barbuda



# Urgent work needed to restore Caribbean tourism in COVID-19 era

The writer is Ambassador of Antigua and Barbuda to the United States and the Organisation of American States. He is also a Senior Fellow at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies at the University of London and at Massey College in the University of Toronto. The views expressed are entirely his own)

To be among the first beneficiaries of a restarted global tourism industry, the present enforced downtime should be used by all actors to position Caribbean countries to compete immediately.

Hoteliers, restaurant owners, shops catering for tourists, should now be considering the protocols they need to institute to make themselves ready for the opening of borders. For instance, will face masks and gloves be part of the uniforms of everyone who interacts with visitors from the time they land and until they depart? In the absence of a vaccine for COVID-19, and for some time after one is developed, visitors and locals will want to be confident that contact will not lead to infection.

Airports and airlines in the region should now be considering how they will cope with even longer check-in times, physical distancing and the necessary health checks that will have to be

conducted before passengers are allowed on airplanes. At least basic protocols should be formulated, and training for airport and airline personnel should be undertaken now. The countries that are ahead of this curve will give the greatest incentives to airlines to favour transporting passengers into and out of their airports.

Eventually, no doubt, international agencies will establish rules and procedures for air travel as they did in 2001 after 9/11 and during the SARS outbreak in 2003. But, Caribbean countries need not await international rules before building confidence in their own airports by putting sensible preparatory measures in place, rehearsing their execution and training staff.

Many questions arise from what will be an entirely new situation, and Caribbean governments should be considering them now. Among them are: will governments be willing to accept visitors cleared of COVID-19 by sending countries or will they want to conduct checks themselves? Should it be the latter, clearing passengers for entry after landing, particularly if two or more large aircraft arrive in a cluster, would be a very long and tiresome process unless airports are reconfigured to



**By Sir Ronald Sanders**

deal with hundreds of passengers at the same time. Staff for clearing passengers will also have to be significantly increased and trained.

If Caribbean countries will have to ensure that passengers have been tested and cleared for COVID-19 on departure and arrival, work on addressing the enormous challenges should be addressed now. One consideration should be to re-deploy existing public servants from less urgent jobs to these necessary tasks.

Hotels should also be working to make themselves ready for visitors by preparing an environment that would give them comfort that they will not be threat-

ened by COVID-19. This would include mandatory use of masks and gloves by all staff at all times. Physical distancing will also have to be implemented in hotel restaurants and bars; crowded spaces will only return when an effective COVID-19 vaccine has been found and distributed in enough quantities worldwide to restore health security.

The treatment of cruise ship passengers will also pose new and huge demands. Since a significant part of their experience is to wander through capital cities, shopping from vendors, big and small, going to beaches and using local transport, how



are they to be checked and cleared for COVID-19? In the season, cruise ship passengers number thousands. If Caribbean health authorities want to ensure that these passengers pose no threat to the local population, measures must be put in place to cope with the issue.

Further, the cruise passengers and the cruise companies will want to be assured that the countries at which they are calling have significantly reduced COVID-19 infections and that they have in operation continuous safeguards against the spread of the disease. Undoubtedly, they will also want to be confident that the health facilities in the country are adequate for treating tourists who may contract the disease.

Therefore, this downtime should not be treated as a period of paralysis. It should be an interval to galvanize action by all in the industry, in each country, to institute measures that will

give cruise ship companies, tour operators and airlines comfort that they are ready to protect the health of their visitors. They also need to communicate such actions to the global tourism community. When tourism authorities and hotels claim they are open for business, that claim should be supported by evidence of their readiness to provide an environment of health safety.

Cruise ship companies want to get their ships cruising. They have lost more than US\$750 million in the first quarter of this year. Shares in Royal Caribbean, Carnival and Norwegian have dropped by 60 to 70%. They, too, have to restore passenger confidence that their ships will be safe. But, however safe they may make their ships, they will want to be assured that the ports at which they call are also safe.

Airlines have also taken a huge beating. Virgin Airlines is seeking a bailout,

or it might never fly again; Airlines for America report that American, Jet Blue and others are already on track to lose US\$87 billion in revenue this year; British Airways has had to lay-off 12,000 staff, and is faced with closing down its operations at London Gatwick Airport from which Caribbean flights are served. Global air travel could lose more than US\$252 billion this year.

Airlines, too, need to get their planes in the air. They will fly to the countries best prepared to deal with COVID-19. So, the players in the Caribbean tourism industry at local and regional levels should be taking action now.

They will be doing so in an atmosphere of concern about flying and cruising. Any pent-up demand for tourism will be tempered by fear and by cost. Configuring airplanes for safe physical distancing will reduce the number of passengers

and consequently increase the cost of travel.

Both North America and Europe are now facing huge job losses and millions of people are forced to spend their savings. Only the well-off will easily be able to afford leisure travel in the immediate future. COVID-19 is forecast to cause a fall in tourism receipts globally of 20-30% (or US\$450 billion) this year. By comparison, during the global recession of 2008 international tourist arrivals declined by only 4%, while the 2003 SARS outbreak resulted in a decline of a mere 0.4%.

The problem is real and alarming. Building confidence in tourism capacity must start now, if the Caribbean will be ready to take advantage of borders opening.

Responses and previous commentaries: [www.sirronaldsanders.com](http://www.sirronaldsanders.com)


 ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

# POINTE X PRESS

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# Borrowing is Not an Option for Caribbean Countries, Access to Concessional Funding and Debt Relief is Urgently Needed to Face the COVID-19 Crisis



*Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of ECLAC*

Prime Ministers, Premiers, Finance Ministers, Financial Secretaries, and other high-level government representatives from 15 Caribbean countries held yesterday a virtual meeting with ECLAC, heads of Caribbean regional organizations and representatives of other UN agencies in the subregion to discuss the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their economies, already besieged by both climatic and economic shocks, including heavy indebtedness and high exposure to natural disasters.

The videoconference was presided over by Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), who connected with Heads of State and senior financial decision-makers from ECLAC's Member Countries

and Associate Members in the Caribbean area: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Guyana, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sint Maarten, Trinidad and Tobago and United States Virgin Islands. The meeting was also attended by United Nations' resident coordinators in the subregion, representatives from other UN System entities such including the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) as well as regional intergovernmental organizations including the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), the Caribbean Community

(CARICOM), the CARICOM Development Fund (CDF), the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility Segregated Portfolio Company (CCRIF SPC) and the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB).

Alicia Bárcena was accompanied by the Director of ECLAC's Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean in Port of Spain (Trinidad and Tobago), Diane Quarless, who moderated the dialogue, and other ECLAC experts from that office, including the Director of the Economic Development Division, Daniel Titelman from the Commission's Headquarters in Santiago, Chile.

At the event, Alicia Bárcena stressed that Caribbean countries must increase their fiscal space and need more favorable financing conditions, notwithstanding their income per capita income levels, in order to face the pandemic's effects. "Considered as middle or high income countries, Caribbean countries face a lack of access to liquidity on concessional terms", Bárcena pointed out. "This is why policy proposals to support economic recovery with a people-centered approach are urgently needed", she added. Among the Prime Ministers and Premiers attending were the Honourable Gaston Browne, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Corporate Governance of Antigua and Barbuda; the Honourable Roosevelt Skerit, Prime Minister and

Minister of Finance, Economic Affairs, Investment, Planning, Resilience, Sustainable Development, Telecommunications and Broadcasting of Dominica; the Honourable K. Peter Turnquest, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance of the Bahamas; the Honourable Andrew A. Fahie, Premier and Minister of Finance of the British Virgin Islands; and the Honourable Easton Taylor Farrell, Premier and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Finance, Economic Development, Trade, Tourism and Culture of Montserrat.

All of them expressed concern at the highly vulnerable economic situation that the countries of the subregion were currently facing and urged ECLAC's support of their advocacy in engagement with the international community for better access to grants and concessional financing, given their inability to service debt payments in the current circumstances. In the words of Prime Minister Gaston Browne, "the economic burden for our countries has been unsustainable because of the high levels of debt. We don't have the capacity for printing money and our policy instruments are very limited. What is required at this point is some level of support from international financial institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. ECLAC can help us advocate and raise its voice for us", he declared.



## 'Unprecedented' \$2 billion economy recovery plan

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Prime Minister tonight unveiled an "unprecedented" \$2 billion economic plan over the next two years to prop up the economy.

The Prime Minister said a \$400 million stimulus package for businesses to keep staff on the payroll had never before been seen in Barbados and was designed to "fill the holes in spending in the economy".

She announced an economic plan would also focus on a public and private capital works programme (PPP), increasing the island's self-sufficiency, the creation of a Barbados Tourism Fund and \$210 million would be spent on families affected by the shutdown.

Mottley said: "Our economy was sticking to the course. [It] provided us with the reserves, provided us with the room, provided us with the credit and enough standing now regionally and internationally for us to launch this most comprehensive integrated programme that the country has ever seen, largely because we have never had this kind of crisis facing us.

"We've focused the programme on supporting those who have lost their jobs in the shutdown and to keep those as far as possible who have jobs into their jobs. The economic plan has five parts... and the effect of

them is to fill the hole in spending in this economy to the tune of near \$2 billion over two years.

"This is the biggest package of spending initiatives ever rolled out over a two-year period on a supplemental basis from what we would otherwise have as our core activities."

Mottley said it was hoped that businesses would be inclined to keep their staff.

"This is largely new and which I will announce tonight is a series of measures that will inject \$215 million one way and a \$200 million fund being mobilized on condition that we hold on to as much staff and jobs as possible," she noted.

Mottley said the private sector was expected to contribute \$800 million in investment due to the start of six major projects in the next two years.

Among those expected to resume "in the next week or two" are the \$400 million Sam Lord's Castle project, the Crane and \$25 million in improvements to the Apes Hill Golf Course.

Government also touted the \$60 million expansion of Sandals at Dover, the \$200 million Sagcor Retirement Villages Project as well as the \$400 million Hyatt Zero to begin shortly.

But Mottley said the COVID-19 pandemic was projected to cost Government over \$400 million in



*Prime Minister Mia Mottley*

tax revenue.

She said: "We estimate that over the next 12 months, and we have had to revise upwards the numbers that we spoke about three, four weeks ago in Parliament, that we will lose now in the vicinity of \$450 million in Government's tax revenues as a result of the economy being fully, partially shut, or only slowly opening.

"There will be less income tax collected, less corporation tax, less Value Added Tax (VAT), less excise tax, less duties, less fuel and air transport levies. We have spent or committed over \$75 million in health related expenditures over the course of the last few weeks on different items."

The Prime Minister revealed that \$40 million had been spent on isolation and quarantine treatment centres, and buying much-needed equipment for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and polyclinics around

the island.

She said that the difference in public revenues and expenditures in this country could worsen by a cumulative \$700 million.

But the PM gave the assurance that the island's foreign reserves were enough to see the island through the crisis.

"Just before COVID-19 struck, our reserves had reached \$1.55 billion, the highest level at that time recorded on a like-for-like basis for a while. Today, as a result of the low-interest borrowing from our partner, the Inter-American Development Bank, our reserves today as I speak to you are just over \$1.7 billion. It is more than enough reserve cover," Mottley said.

She also announced that Government was "in the middle of an IMF mission this week" and was "moving along in a manner which is satisfactory to us and to them".

## CARPHA urges Member States to continue to maintain their vaccine coverage while fighting the COVID-2019 pandemic

Although there is no vaccine against the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19), vaccinations against seasonal influenza and measles are available to prevent respiratory illness and vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks during the COVID-19 pandemic.

If vaccination programmes are not continued, more people are likely to get sick from vaccine-preventable diseases, thus increasing the burden on the already strained health systems. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. The virus is transmitted mainly via small respiratory droplets through sneezing, coughing, or when people interact with each other for some time in close proximity (usually less than two metres).

Given the outbreak of COVID-19 in the Caribbean region, it is important that people take the necessary steps to protect themselves and their loved ones. Because the virus is new and different it requires its own vaccine. Research is currently underway to develop a vaccine.

Dr Joy St John, Executive Director at the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) states, "Safe and effective vaccines have been available and used for over 60 years, and vaccination remains the most

effective way to prevent influenza, measles and other vaccine-preventable diseases. Once a COVID-19 vaccination becomes available in the Caribbean, CARPHA is assured that the same care and due diligence would have been in place in developing the vaccine, as has been in place for the development of vaccines against respiratory illnesses."

The Caribbean has long been a leader among regions of the world, as our countries have applied high standards in the delivery of vaccination programmes. While successfully maintaining a measles-free status since 1991, the Caribbean has also been eradicated of endemic smallpox in 1971, polio in 1994, and rubella and congenital rubella syndrome in 2015. The health of the general public improved drastically with the vaccinations that allowed children to survive because they no longer developed severe measles infections.

If we fall behind in our immunisation programmes we run the risk of recurrence of measles and other previously eradicated diseases. In light of this, CARPHA is urging governments to continue to maintain their vaccine coverage as a matter of priority, so Ministries of Health do not have to manage outbreaks of vaccine preventable diseases like measles, while fighting the COVID-2019 pandemic.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends annual vaccination, which is especially important for health workers and people at higher risk of serious influenza complications, such as the very young, pregnant women, the elderly and chronically ill persons, and for people who live with or care for high risk individuals. Dr. St. John explains that the primary form of transmission for COVID-19 and the flu are through the movement of droplets between persons and direct physical contact with the virus even on surfaces. She added that large social events can create serious public health challenges because persons are often crowded together, making spread of COVID-19 from person to person very easy.

CARPHA encourages persons to continue to practice good personal hygiene in order to reduce the risk of transmission of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), influenza and other respiratory viruses. Good hygiene measures that persons can take include:

- Covering your mouth with a tissue or sneezing or coughing into the crook of your elbow.
- Safely disposing of used tissues.
- Washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after coughing and sneezing and before and after meal preparation,



*Dr. Joy St. John, Executive Director, Caribbean Public Health Agency*

eating and using the toilets. Alternatively, you may use an alcohol-based hand-sanitizer.

- Avoiding contact with others by staying home if you are sick.

- Cleaning and disinfecting surfaces regularly.

This year, between April 25 and May 2, 2020, CARPHA joins its partners and the rest of the world in celebrating the 18th annual Vaccination Week in the Americas with the slogan "Love. Trust. Protect. #GetVax." This year's campaign seeks to bring to mind the love people have for their children, themselves, and their communities; the trust in vaccines' ability to save lives; and the protection they provide from diseases for everyone, everywhere.

"To maintain our community protection, we call on Ministries of Health to implement catch-up campaigns. This will ensure that a person completes their vaccination schedule in the shortest, but effective time frame. Continued vigilance is important, and general practitioners should remain alert and take the appropriate actions in suspected cases of vaccine-preventable diseases," said Dr. St. John.



## Trinidad and Tobago ranked high in readiness to relax covid19 lockdown

Trinidad and Tobago ranks second among 149 countries in terms of readiness to begin relaxing covid19 lockdown measures.

A study by Oxford University's Blavatnik School of Government, dated April 23, analysed the countries' responses to covid19 based on the number of controlled cases, tracking, tracing and isolating, managing imported cases and community understanding.

Oxford is top of the Times Higher Education Supplement's world university 2020 rankings.

The study used four of the WHO's criteria for when a country can begin considering relaxing "lockdown" and social-distancing measures.

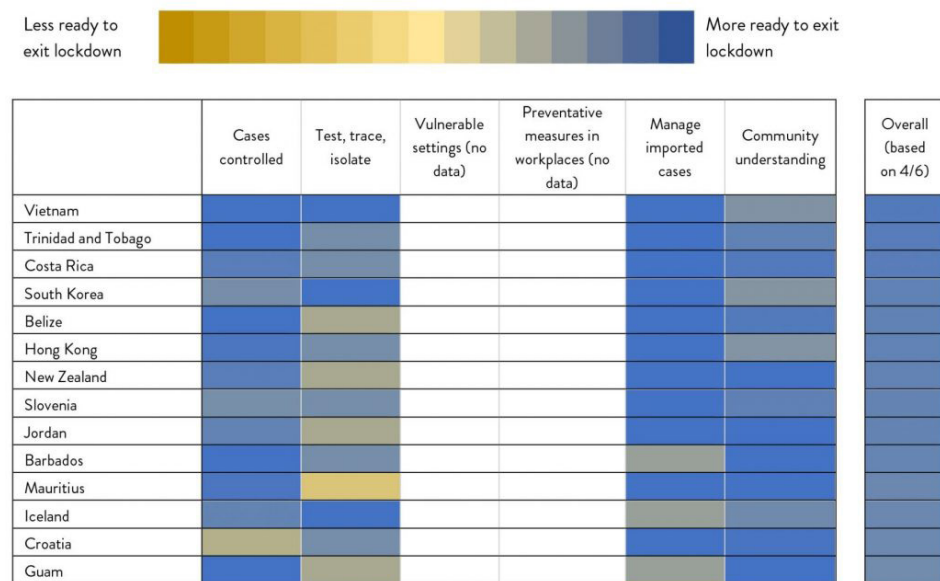
These are: Establishing preventive measures in workplaces; having sufficient public health workforce and health system capacities to shift from detecting and treating cases to detecting and isolating; managing the risk of importing and exporting cases; and ensuring communities understand that large-scale movement restriction, public health and social measures are a "new normal" and will continue.

Vietnam was ranked second and Costa Rica was ranked third. The US was ranked 54th and Iran last.

The university said, "While the data cannot fully

**Table 1: Lockdown Rollback Checklist 20 April 2020**

(NB: Not every country is updated every day, so data for any particular country may be several days out of date)



say how ready countries are to leave lockdown, it does provide for a rough comparison across nations."

It said "only a handful" of countries are doing well at the checklist at the moment.

At a press briefing on Wednesday morning, Minister of Health Terrence Deyalsingh said he was glad the university had done such a study. He also took a copy to the briefing.

He said, "That is testimony to what we have been saying all along – that our response to covid19, led by the Prime Minister, was a robust one, and we will only get this type of recognition outside of TT."

"What this speaks to is that the world is recognising the decision not to flip a switch and just open back your economy is the correct

way."

He reminded the public that Dr Rowley said his decisions will be guided by science, "with the sole objective of saving lives."

He said the study is a good one that paints TT in an "excellent light."

CEO of the TT Chamber of Commerce Gabriel Faria commended the Health Ministry on the achievement, saying it has been doing "excellent work."

"I'm confident in the leadership of the Ministry of Health, from the minister to the Chief Medical Officer and the rest of the team, that they will guide us through this process responsibly."

But he said an ideal situation would have been for the government to support closed businesses by providing them with fiscal support,

so they could remain closed for "as long as we can."

But he noted that as in many other countries, "unlimited support" is not possible, so lives and livelihoods have to be weighed against each other. He said the economy can be restarted responsibly.

Asked if he feels TT will be affected by the US's low rank, which means it may not relax measures anytime soon, he said, "We are not solely dependent on the US for our supplies, so many of our manufacturers and importers have identified alternative sources of supply. This was highlighted when China could not provide products to TT early in February this year."

But he reiterated, the Health Ministry is doing "an excellent job."

## Trump administration draws up plans to punish China over coronavirus outbreak

Washington (CNN)The Trump administration is formulating a long-term plan to punish China on multiple fronts for the coronavirus pandemic, injecting a rancorous new element into a critical relationship already on a steep downward slide.

The effort matches but goes far beyond an election campaign strategy of blaming Beijing to distract from President Donald Trump's errors in predicting and handling the crisis, which has now killed more than 60,000 Americans.

Multiple sources inside the administration say that there is an appetite to use various tools, including sanctions, canceling US debt obligations and drawing up new trade policies, to make clear to China, and to everyone else, where they feel the responsibility lies.

"We have to get the economy going again, we have to be careful about how we do this," said one administration official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"But we will find ways to show the Chinese that their actions are completely reprehensible."

The intelligence community is meanwhile coming under enormous pressure from the administration, with senior officials pushing to find out whether the virus escaped into the public from a laboratory in Wuhan, China, two sources familiar with the frus-

trations said. In an unprecedented move, the intelligence community issued a statement saying it was surging resources on the matter as it would in any crisis.

"The IC will continue to rigorously examine emerging information and intelligence to determine whether the outbreak began through contact with infected animals or if it was the result of an accident at a laboratory in Wuhan," the statement said.

CNN reported earlier this month that the government was looking into the theory that the virus originated in the lab but hadn't yet able to corroborate it. Earlier this month Gen. Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the weight of evidence suggests the virus was of natural origin.

The New York Times reported Thursday that officials were pressuring intelligence analysts to find information supporting the idea.

"I think we will figure it out," an administration official said, when asked if it was possible the origin of the virus would never be established.

The US-China clash is brewing amid growing suspicion inside the administration over China's rising strategic challenge and fury that the virus destroyed an economy seen as Trump's passport to a second term.

"I am very confident that the Chinese Communist Party



*Officials note that finding ways to punish China will be a sensitive business.*

will pay a price for what they did here, certainly from the United States," Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said last week.

The building confrontation comes as both sides seek to exploit an already fragmented geopolitical environment already shaken by their rivalry that has been thoroughly fragmented by the pandemic.

In the long term, it threatens to cause uneasy choices for US Asian allies who are also keen not to antagonize the giant in their backyard. And the growing tension could have significant repercussions for the global economy as the US seeks to wean itself off supply

chains dominated by China.

There are serious questions to be addressed about China's transparency in the early days of the outbreak in Wuhan and whether its autocratic system fostered an attempt to cover it up. The United States is not the only nation that wants answers amid a pandemic that has devastated the global economy and cost hundreds of thousands of lives.

In response to building pressure, China has launched a propaganda effort to distract from its own culpability, including blaming US soldiers for importing the pathogen in remarks that infuriated Trump.



## Thousands of cruise ship crew members remain out at sea amid clash over CDC's rules

Thousands of cruise ship crew members remain stuck at sea amid the coronavirus pandemic as their companies clash with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention over rules to bring them home.

Carnival Cruise Line said it has more than 10,000 healthy crew members on board their ships and is planning to have them home to their respective countries over the next week. Roughly 10,000 crew have already been repatriated, the company said in a press release.

"The safety and well-being of our team members continues to be a top priority," said Christine Duffy, president of Carnival Cruise Line. "Given the pause in our operations, we are committed to getting our crew members safely home to their families. We sincerely thank them for their hard work, patience and understanding during this process." Ryan Driscoll, a resident guest entertainer, has been out at sea since Feb. 23. The 26-year-old vocalist from Las Vegas said he was originally on the Seabourn Quest but was transferred to its sister ship, the Odyssey about a week ago. The Quest took on European crew members to get them home, he said. People from the United States, Central America and South America were put on the Odyssey, which is currently anchored off the coast of Bridgetown, Barbados.

"It's been very strange," Driscoll told NBC News Thursday from his cabin. "We call it the twilight zone. Everyone's got cabin fever. We've been confined to our cabins now for two weeks."

Part of the reason crew members have been unable to disembark the ships and travel home is because of conflicts regarding guidelines issued by the CDC, a situation first reported by the Miami Herald. Following coronavirus outbreaks on cruise ships and the spread of the disease, the CDC extended its No Sail Order which says that cruise line companies must implement a plan to safely get crew members home. The agency will allow crew to disembark only if the cruise line signs an agreement stating that the company has complied with the CDC's requirements, which says that the companies need to provide noncommercial transportation. A CDC spokesperson told the Miami Herald that cruise companies have complained that arranging private transportation for crew would be too expensive. Driscoll said he thinks Seabourn Cruise Line, a subsidiary of Carnival Corporation, is handling this unprecedented situation the best it can but does not want to be kept in the dark about what's going on. As of now, he does not know when he will be able to head home. He said he hopes the ship will allow him to disembark in Barbados so he can catch a flight back to the U.S. He said he's been in contact with the U.S. Embassy in Bridgetown and is working with the ship's management as well as the cruise company. "We're all very frustrated. [We] want to get home, see our families. Especially when every day you're looking out your window and you see land 200 yards away knowing I can leave



A man rides a bicycle in front of the Coral Princess ship, of Princess Cruises fleet, docked at Miami Port with patients affected by coronavirus in Miami on April 4, 2020

but I'm not allowed off the ship," Driscoll said. Carnival Cruise Line said in its press release that 18 of its ships with crew members still on board will rendezvous in the Bahamas within the next several days as the company finalizes plans to get everyone home. "Nine ships will sail to their destinations with crew members from North American-based ships on board," the company said. "The remaining nine ships will spend most of their time in anchorage positions in The Bahamas or Panama and eventually all ships will reduce their crew numbers to safe operational manning levels."

Carnival said all crew members who are able to return home have undergone health checks, including taking their temperatures, and have been cleared by their medical teams to travel. Alex Adkins, a Royal Caribbean employee, has been stuck on a ship for weeks with roughly 1,000 other crew members. The vessel originally left San Juan, Puerto Rico but could not return there because the ports are closed.

The ship, which Adkins asked not to be identified, let guests off in Miami, Florida on March 17 while the crew stayed on board. The vessel is currently off the coast of Barbados. According

to Adkins, crew members have been told that the company has sent the CDC its repatriation plans but either the CDC has not responded or the company's request for a charter flight has been denied. "We've been told that there are 'plans' to get us on these flights. None of these flights so far have been confirmed," Adkins said. "There were two flights, this past week, that I was supposed to be on that for whatever reason didn't happen." The 25-year-old from Dallas said he does not blame Royal Caribbean or the CDC. Both Adkins and Driscoll said there have been no known coronavirus cases on either of their ships. "It's just frustrating that we seem to just kind of be citizens of not our country but we seem to be citizens of the company that we work for," Adkins said.

Royal Caribbean said in a statement that it has been working closely with health officials to get its crew home.

"We submitted a plan to the CDC and are awaiting their feedback," the statement read. "We continue to work with all appropriate authorities to establish a safe and secure way for all of our crew members to return home as soon as possible."

## BA warns Gatwick staff it may not resume flights there

London's Gatwick airport could bear the brunt of British Airways' job cuts after the airline warned its operation may not return following the coronavirus crisis that has battered the aviation sector.

In a letter to BA staff at the complex south of London, seen by the FT, Adam Carson, managing director of BA Gatwick, wrote: "As you know, we suspended our Gatwick flying schedule at the start of April and there is no certainty as to when or if these services can or will return."

The memo was sent on Wednesday, just a day after IAG, BA's parent company, announced plans to cut almost 30 per cent of BA's 42,000 workforce. The airline group warned this week that a return to 2019 passenger levels would take "several years" and said it was looking at cutting up to 12,000 jobs at the British airline.

It comes as the outlook for aviation further darkened this week, and carriers have moved from furloughing workers to making redundancies.



*Airline's operations at London's second biggest airport face brunt of 12,000 job cut*

SAS, the Scandinavian airline, said on Tuesday it would permanently cut about half of its workforce, while Norwegian Air Shuttle warned the bulk of its fleet was likely to remain grounded for the next 12 months.

Gatwick represents about 20 per cent of BA's operations. Its main hub is at Heathrow airport, and it also operates out of London City. In late March, the carrier temporarily closed its operations at London City and stopped

flying from Gatwick a week later. The letter was first reported by the BBC. While Gatwick may suffer a bigger portion of the job cuts, some within the industry are sceptical that BA would leave London's second biggest airport completely. Job cuts are expected to take place across all of the airline's airport operations.

Meanwhile, a separate letter sent to BA's pilots laid out the scale of the airline's plans to cut jobs and restructure working conditions.

It has proposed to cut about a quarter of 4,300 pilot jobs, and said it was proposing to meet minimum statutory obligations as the cost of delivering any enhanced voluntary redundancy programme would now be "prohibitively expensive".

In the memo, Al Bridger, BA's director of flight operations, wrote: "We are now at a critical juncture and must table proposals for structural change so that our business is in a credible position to respond to what will be a challenging and uncertain trading environment for a sustained period of time."

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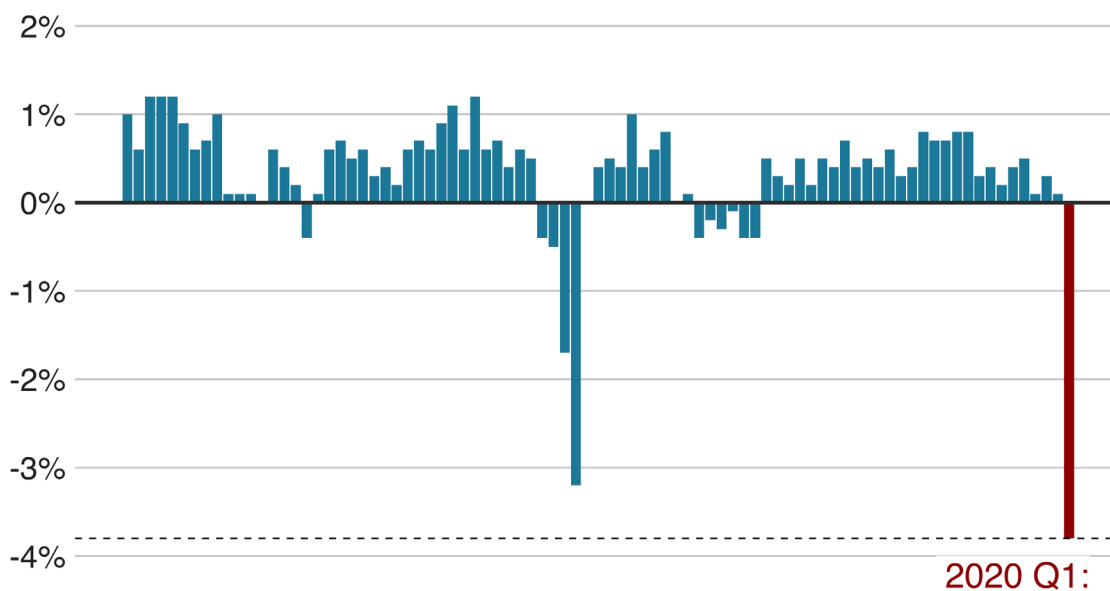




# Coronavirus: Eurozone economy shrinks at record rate

## Eurozone economy shrinks at record pace

### Quarter-on-quarter GDP



*The eurozone economy shrank at the sharpest pace on record in the first quarter as the Covid-19 pandemic forced countries into lockdown.*

A first estimate of GDP between January and March showed a contraction of 3.8%, worse than during the financial crisis.

Separate figures revealed a steep fall in economic activity in France and Spain over the same period.

In Germany, unemployment has increased though it remains relatively low compared with other nations.

On Wednesday, the US revealed that its economy had suffered its most severe contraction for more than a decade, after GDP shrank at an annual rate of 4.8% in the first quarter of the year.

However, this “annualised”

rate implies that the US economy actually contracted by about 1.2% in the three-month period, a less severe contraction than in the eurozone.

On Thursday, figures from the US Department of Labor showed that 3.8 million more Americans filed claims for unemployment benefits last week. That is the lowest weekly rise for a month, but still very high, bringing jobs lost during the pandemic to about 30 million.

‘Free-fall’

Andrew Kenningham of Capital Economics called the European news a blizzard of depressing economic data that “confirms that the eurozone

economy was in free-fall”.

In the case of France, the 5.8% decline in gross domestic product (GDP) was the largest the quarterly series has recorded since it began in 1949.

Two other large economies have published first estimates: Spain saw a contraction of 5.1% while Italy’s economy shrank by 4.7%.

The figure for the eurozone as a whole was more moderate, but is still by any standards severe especially for a contraction over just three months.

So far most individual European countries have not published national estimates.

That applies to the largest of them, Germany. But new figures for the German labour market are beginning to show the impact of the pandemic, with the number of people out of work rising by 373,000 in April.

However, the full impact is damped by the country’s system of financial help to people put onto shorter working hours, known as Kurzarbeit.

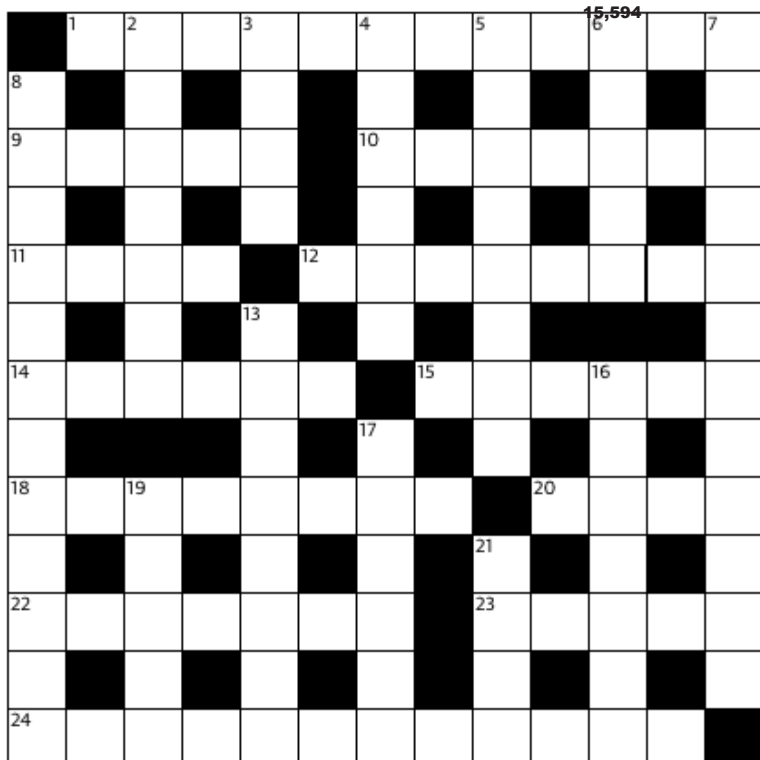
Claus Vistesen of Pantheon Macroeconomics said the news on the German labour market was “bad, but it would have been disastrous without Kurzarbeit”.

Growth warning European Central Bank (ECB) President Christine Lagarde said that a sharp downturn in eurozone economic activity in April “suggests that the impact [of the pandemic] is likely to be even more severe in the second quarter.” She warned that eurozone economic growth could fall between 5% and 12% this year, “depending crucially on the duration of the containment measures and the success of policies to mitigate the economic consequences for businesses and workers”.

Ms Lagarde added that the ECB was fully prepared to increase emergency support measures to ease the burden of the pandemic, to “as much as necessary and for as long as needed”.

# QUICK CROSSWORD

Quick crossword No



## Across

- 1 Musically arranged (12)  
 9 Part of a step (5)  
 10 Decisive (7)  
 11 River (which is originally blue and white) (4)  
 12 Muddled (6,2)  
 14 Shallow trench made by a plough (6)  
 15 Expressed (6)  
 18 Suspenseful (8)  
 20 Worry unnecessarily (4)  
 22 Liberate (7)  
 23 Winged insect — amigo (anag) (5)  
 24 Agent that destroys bacteria (12)

## Down

- 2 Cattle thief (7)  
 3 Rent (4)  
 4 Private soldier in the Royal Engineers (6)  
 5 Studying just before an exam (8)  
 6 Carried (something heavy) (5)  
 7 Ruin (12)  
 8 Metamorphosed (12)  
 13 Grizzle (8)  
 16 Indisputable (7)  
 17 Audible and uncontrolled expulsion of air through nose and mouth  
 19 Wastes time (5)  
 21 Fissure in something (4)

# CARTOON CORNER

## Garfield







## DAILY HOROSCOPE

**ARIES (Mar 21-Apr. 19):** Your most important relationships can fly high if you pay attention to the direction the wind is blowing. Your sense of values may have changed, making something that once seemed desirable now seem bland and unexciting.

**TAURUS (Apr. 20-May 20):** Do your own thing without investing in bling. It's more important to stick to what is real and authentic for you. You might make startling discoveries and breakthroughs if you put your mind to it.

**GEMINI (May 21-June 20):** Better to be safe than sorry. This is a good time to keep a low profile on social media to avoid an embarrassing situation. Friends might be reluctant to tell you the truth about something you might need to hear.

**CANCER (June 21-July 22):** Nothing is impossible. When you want something that's hard to get, make the effort to develop a game plan so you can earn it. You might become enthused about putting money to work on your own behalf.

**LEO (July 23-Aug. 22):** You may have the incentive to show off leadership skills and executive abilities. Competition may stoke the fire of your ambitions so that you're willing to go the extra mile to win. Focus on clarity regarding your career.

**VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22):** Enlightenment can light the way. Learning new facts and techniques may have a great deal of merit. Talk things over with a partner and get any misunderstandings straightened out before they create a barrier to intimacy.

**LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22.):** Rise above any passing misunderstandings. You possess enough imagination to figure out why someone is holding back. Having good times with favorite people may be enough to satisfy your need for love.

**SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21):** You may need to step up your brainpower to keep up with a quick-thinking partner or friend. Hold off on making important purchases, since good taste and lasting values may be in short supply at this time.

**SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21):** Take care to not give someone the impression that you are dissatisfied with the status quo when you merely want to be up to date with the latest information. Conversations can turn mere acquaintances into fast friends.

**CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19):** You're never too old to learn new tricks, although sometimes it takes longer to learn them thoroughly. Borrow brilliant ideas from discussions and make them your own by taking key concepts to the next level.

**AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18):** If you look at your bank account, it might seem like easy come, easy go ... and go and go. Some of the latest budgeting ideas and technology can help you keep track of expenditures and eliminate guesswork.

**PISCES (Feb. 19-Mar. 20):** You may assume that everything is just fine between you and a mate or close companion, but there might be something unexpressed that could create issues. Avoid disputes with family members.



# PSG awarded French Title after season abandoned

Paris St.Germain has been awarded the Ligue 1 title after it was announced the season would not resume because of the coronavirus pandemic. PSG were 12 points clear at the top of the table, with a game in hand, when French football was suspended indefinitely on 13 March. Earlier this week the

French Government cancelled the 2019-20 sporting season.

The Club said it wished to dedicate the title to health-care staff and all the everyday heroes on the front line.

Before the Government's intervention, French football's governing body had been hoping to resume the season on 17 June.

PGS have been awarded the title on a points-per-game basis, while Lorient had been crowned Ligue 2 champions on the same principle.

## Players are scared about Premier League return

Players are scared about the prospect of returning to action amid the coronavirus pandemic, says Manchester City star striker Sergio Aguero.

The premier league is hoping to resume the season on 8 June, which would require players be back in full training by 18 May.

Top flight clubs will meet today (Friday) to discuss the options for the restart.

The majority of players are scared because they have children and families said the 31 year old.

The Premier League has been suspended since 13 March because of coronavirus but all clubs remain committed to playing this season's 92 remaining fixtures.

Aguero said he and his teammate, will be quiet nervous and extra careful when they return to work.



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## He was like a bird – Keithley Greene

Keithley “Zazawakie” Greene grew up in Greenbay playing sports on the streets because there was no football field in the community at the time. “We played all sports: football, cricket, hand-tennis, while Hoppers, our community football team, practiced over at Greenbay school on private land,” Greene noted.

“One day my friends and I were moving around with our ‘wheella’, as we called it back then, and I came across Hoppers team training, which was training at the time.

“Henceforth, I would from time to time pass by and watch,” said ‘Zaza’, as he is called.

“My first love was really cricket, which I showed more interest in at first while attending the St. Joseph Academy School. But I used to fool around with friends who were kicking



around, standing in the middle like a goalkeeper, and flying about stopping the ball,” added Greene.

Greene explained that one day the goalkeeper for the school team got injured, and someone said there was ‘a little boy’ in second form who can goal-keep, and they came for me and said ‘you are playing tomorrow, be ready’.”



He stood between the sticks in his first organized game against PMS, a game they won 4-2, and things took off from there.

“I preferred being an outfield player, playing as a striker, but my chances at Hoppers were few and I was encouraged to join Ottos Rangers by Ralph Gonsalves, who was their goal-keeper at the time,

which I did. A year later, I returned to Hoppers and was eventually given a chance in the goal.

Greene developed a reputation for ‘flying’ around like a bird between the pipes, eventually made his way into the national team with some outstanding performances in the Premier Division.

Talking to PointeXpress, Greene was high in praise for the former Leeward Islands tournament while talking about his experiences playing in St. Kitts and Nevis. Greene won the former OECS football championship as the nation’s leading goal-keeper, an achievement no other local custodian has achieved.

Greene hung up his gloves in 1995 and he is encouraging young players to work hard, stay focused, and put education at the top of their priority list.

## No problems, always a solution

Mali Richards, the son of Sir. Vivian Richards describes his life in sports as an ‘adventure’ where he has learnt from ups and downs trying to live up to the expectations of his legendary father.

“I was always conscious of what was going on in my father’s life and I just sat back, observed and learned,” he expressed when asked what role his dad played in his sporting life.

Richards was a guest on the TIMEOUT program on Point FM Thursday talking about his past experiences representing Antigua and Barbuda and the Leeward Islands in cricket.

“I had a wonderful time playing for my country. I learnt a lot, and back then, cricket was very competitive and enjoyable,” Mali said, “I remember playing parish league for Mahico, and on any given day, Sir Curtley Ambrose, Ridley Jacobs, or Sylvester ‘Bouncing’ Joseph would show up; and these guys were players you would look up to, so sharing the same field with them was an honour.”

Mali also represented Antigua and Barbuda in tennis, being ranked worldwide as a junior.

The left-hander, who has a tri-

ple century in his armory, attended school in England and was scouted to represent the England Under-19 cricket team, but Richards said back then the rules were different and he always wanted to leave his options open to play for the West Indies if the opportunity presented itself.

The former national cricketer says he is not bitter he was not more successful in cricket, and he has used his experience in sports to further his life in other avenues.

Presently Mali works with his dad organizing his busy internationally scheduled events.

## Steadroy Challenger: Never got the credit he deserved

Steadroy Challenger, a proud Bolans man who was plunged into leadership at the tender age of 14 years, was one of the finest mid-fielders in the late 1970's and 80's.

Challenger said he started playing in his community at the age of seven with older players, and by the age of 14, he was the leader of his community team. "I realized there was a reason I was chosen, even though I found it strange leading guys in their 20's and 30's; but I rose to the challenge respecting the responsibility," he recalled.

Challenger, who is a founding member of former premier league champions Sap, said the team started when a number of guys organized a team called City United in 1978 playing in the Bolans village league. A year later, most of the guys left for the United States and "we had to reorganize ourselves, eventually naming the team Sap in 1979."

"In 1983 we applied to the Antigua and Barbuda

Football Association for membership, which was granted, and the emergence of Sap started," Challenger expressed.

"One of my proud moments is representing the National Under-19 team in 1979 which led to me playing a year for Superstars with Mervyn Richards, Sir. Vivian Richards, and the Lewis Brothers; an experience I will always cherish," said the well-rounded midfielder.

Challenger sees himself as a trailblazer, noting that "back in my days, players from the country had to perform twice as well as their counterparts from the city to be recognized, and I am very proud when I see most of the teams in the top league drawn from 'country' areas and over 50 percent of the local national players also coming from the outskirts."

But the former box to box midfielder is not happy with the quality of foreign imports into the local league stating "I don't mind them coming, if they can



add something to the development of our league, but what I am seeing is extremely poor and it is retarding the growth of our local players," Challenger said. "There needs to be a quota of no more than three for-

eign imports on the field at one time."

Sports journalist and former national captain Veron Epilus Edwards Jr describes Challenger as one of the finest and most complete midfielders he has seen in his time and said he patterned his style of play after him growing up.

 **DEWS**