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April 15, 2025

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"A 10% decline in the market is fairly common—it happens about once a year. Investors who realize this are less likely to sell in a panic, and more likely to remain invested, benefitting from the wealth building power of stocks." - Christopher Davis

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Debt Dynamics & Trends Across JSE Sectors

Debt often gets a bad rap, conjuring images of high interest payments and defaults. But the truth is, debt isn't inherently bad. When used prudently, debt can help companies to finance major expansions, acquisitions, and upgrades that can ultimately enhance returns to shareholders. But before shareholders get their reward, lenders must be paid. In today's cover story, we explore the trends in debt reliance of non-financial services companies¹ listed on the Jamaica Stock Exchange (JSE) over the last 5 years and assess their ability to repay obligations. In our assessment, we'll use the Debt-to-Equity ratio to gauge a company's reliance on debt versus equity, as well as the Interest Coverage and Debt Service Coverage ratios to test their ability to meet interest and short-term debt payments.

Over the last five years (2020 to 2024), aggregate leverage, among non-financial companies, as measured by the total debt-to-equity ratio (D/E²), remained relatively steady, averaging 0.65x over the period. However, a closer look reveals that 5 of the 7³ non-financial sectors assessed relied more on debt to fund their operations relative to equity, while the remaining 2 relied more on equity/internally generated capital.

Real Estate and Manufacturing & Distribution (M&D) sectors have become more debt reliant, using it to refinance existing obligations, pursue acquisitions and fund expansion projects and other growth initiatives. The Real Estate sector saw the largest increase, as its

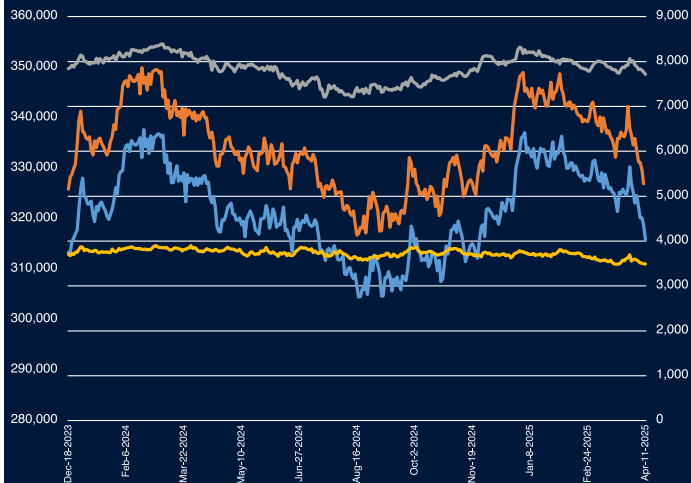
leverage doubled from 0.39x to 0.61x. This was driven by firms like Eppley Caribbean Property Fund (CPFV), Kingston Properties (KPREIT) and Sygnus Real Estate Finance (SRF). Eppley CPFV's D/E increased from 0.20x to 0.41x, as its debt balance rose from \$1.32Bn to \$4.09Bn. CPFV's higher debt reflects CIBC loans used to restructure subsidiary debt and acquire a 50% stake in a joint venture in Trinidad and Tobago. KPREIT saw its leverage rise from 0.45x to 0.65x, as its debt leapt from \$1.93Bn to \$5.33Bn. These proceeds were used to acquire properties in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, as well as to renovate hurricane-damaged properties and refinance existing RBC debt. In an environment where high interest rates weakened the supply of equity capital, SRF leaned on debt to fund its real estate projects, with leverage rising from 0.44x to 0.72x as its debt increased from \$1.58Bn to \$5.60Bn. The debt, backed by property assets, financed projects like Mammee Bay and other development initiatives. Meanwhile, the M&D sector's leverage rose from 0.76x to 1.04x, led by Seprod, whose leverage jumped from 0.80x to 1.77x. When Seprod acquired A.S. Bryden & Sons (ASBH) in 2022, the transaction was partially funded by a \$3.92Bn loan. The company also absorbed \$14.53Bn in debt from ASBH during the acquisition, and the company further raised its debt balance by \$16.40Bn in 2024. Junior Market M&D firms also became more leveraged, with Tropical Battery the flag bearer. Tropical's leverage climbed from 0.78x to 4.63x after taking a US\$9.5Mn bridge loan from

1 This review focuses on non-financial companies, as financial firms use industry-specific ratios like the capital adequacy and loan-to-deposit ratios. Their high debt levels reflect core operations, not strategic borrowing, and including them would distort the analysis.

2 Measured as total debt divided by total common equity. Total Debt includes Interest Bearing Debt and Leases.

3 Conglomerates, EMI, Entertainment, Health/Tech, M&D, Real Estate and Tourism.

WEEKLY MOVEMENT IN INDICES



MOVEMENT IN INDICES

JSE Indices	Closing Levels	WoW % Change	YTD % Change
Combined Index	326,696.71	-2.68%	-6.01%
Main Market Index	315,618.69	-2.70%	-6.09%
Select Index	7,692.55	-2.25%	-7.15%
Junior Market Index	3,469.81	-2.46%	-7.10%

WINNERS & LOSERS FOR THE WEEK ENDED APRIL 11, 2025

	\$ Change	% Change
CAC2000	+\$0.65	+32.50%
JPS7	+\$10.14	+29.51%
BRG	-\$1.82	-20.36%
PURITY	-\$0.39	-19.12%

MARKET OVERVIEW

For the second consecutive week, eight of the nine JSE indices closed lower in April. This likely reflects rising global risk aversion amid escalating trade tensions between the U.S. and China. The ongoing tariff war continues to intensify, heightening fears of a broader economic fallout that could dampen global growth, and with it, the performance of JSE-listed firms, especially those with international exposure. The JSE Combined Market Index fell by 2.68%, with 72 of the 126 stocks that traded declining, while 39 advanced and 15 remained unchanged. The Financial Market Index (-3.60%) and the Main Market Index (-2.70%) were the week's main underperformers. The decline in the Financial Market Index was primarily driven by Sagicor Group Jamaica Ltd. (SJ: -5.77%) and Guardian Holdings Ltd. (GHL: -10.42%). Despite GHL's share price decline, the company reported a 31.7% increase in earnings to J\$850.15Mn, bolstered by stronger net insurance and investment income. The Main Market Index also came under pressure from weakness in GHL and SJ. Additional declines in NCB Financial Group Ltd. (-2.47%), Seprod Group Ltd. (-5.14%), and WISYNCO (-3.49%) contributed to the weakness in the index. The decline in NCBFG may have been influenced by selling pressure following the announcement of a 12.67 million share transaction on April 4, 2025. Amid the widespread losses, the USD Equities Index stood out as the sole gainer, rising 2.37%, buoyed by a 9.30% increase in PROVENUSD shares.

First Caribbean to refinance a prior Sygnus loan. The Sygnus loan proceeds were used to acquire its U.S. subsidiary, Rose Electronics, helping Tropical expand into the U.S. market and enhance its offerings to serve high-value sectors like healthcare and aerospace.

Smaller JSE Sectors like Health/Tech⁴, Tourism and Entertainment sectors have also increased their use of leverage. For the Health/Tech sector, Edufocal Limited (LEARN) and Medical Disposables and Supplies (MDS) led the charge. LEARN's debts quadrupled to \$0.23Bn, at a time when it carries negative equity, owing to \$311.97Mn in accumulated losses. Meanwhile, MDS saw its debt increase by 51%, at a time when its equity base had also been eroded by two consecutive years of net losses. Other sectors like Tourism – led by Express Catering (ECL's) US\$12Mn loan to refinance debt and complete its airport food court; and Entertainment – led by Supreme Venture's (SVL's) \$6.48Bn borrowings for Acquisitions and expansion in Ghana – have also become more leveraged, with their D/E ratios moving from 0.87x to 0.99x and 1.00x to 1.06x, respectively.

While real estate, M&D, health/tech, tourism and entertainment companies relied more on leverage to finance their operations, Energy, Materials & Industrials (EMI) and Conglomerates sectors were more conservative. EMI companies reduced their leverage from 0.83x to 0.49x, with Caribbean Cement Company (CCC) and Wigton Windfarm (WIGTON) being instrumental in this shift. CCC slashed its leverage from 1.48x to 0.00x as it paid down \$6.73Bn in debt. CCC prepaid two major facilities: a US\$52Mn related-party loan and a five-year unsecured revolving loan. Meanwhile, Wigton's leverage declined from 1.84x to 0.63x as its debt declined from \$5.76Bn to \$2.41Bn due to

Even if companies have to refinance at higher rates, shareholders can still benefit if project returns significantly exceed debt servicing costs. Companies in the Real Estate, M&D and Entertainment sectors that are strategically borrowing to invest in high-return projects can grow EBITDA significantly to service their debts and generate a significant surplus for shareholders.

gradual principal repayments for its amortising bonds. Conglomerates also delevered, with D/E falling from 0.68x to 0.55x. Pan Jamaica Group (PJAM) led the decline, with its D/E falling from 1.46x to 0.96x as its equity base outgrew debt over the period⁵. Jamaica Producers Group's (JPG's) leverage also decreased from 0.26 to 0.00x as its debt shrank from \$4.27Bn to a mere \$5.20Mn. GraceKennedy (GK), on the other hand, saw debt levels remain steady at \$31.17Bn but recorded strong equity growth, which helped to reduce its debt reliance⁶.

Despite rising leverage across several sectors, companies' ability to cover interest payouts to lenders as measured by their interest coverage ratios (ICRs) remained healthy, averaging 5.54x over 5 years. This is because aggregate EBITDA, which is a proxy for cash earnings available to repay interest and service debt over a period, grew at a 12.6% compound annual growth rate (CAGR), outpacing the 10.0% CAGR for interest expenses. The faster EBITDA growth suggests that companies improved their operational efficiency and earnings capacity, allowing them to meet rising interest costs, despite higher leverage. As a result, EMI companies, with their reduced debt, posted the strongest ICR of 9.16x in 2024, up from 4.81x in 2020. For the same reason, the Real Estate sector

also improved, moving from 1.71x to 2.84x. Meanwhile, M&D companies saw a decline from 6.21x to 4.39x as interest expense growth at a CAGR of 32.7% outpaced EBITDA at a CAGR of 21.8%. Notably, Health/Tech stocks still maintained an adequate ICR, albeit after a fall from 3.09x to 1.76x.

While ICRs remained healthy or adequate for all sectors, their Debt Service Coverage Ratios (DSCR) – which measure a company's ability to cover interest expense and maturing debt with EBITDA – were mixed. Aggregate DSCR fell from 1.29x to 0.98x, suggesting a reduced ability to cover total debt obligations, especially upcoming short-term principal repayments. The EMI sector's DSCR improved from 2.89x to 3.74x, and Tourism rose from 0.00x to 1.11x. Conglomerates also remained healthy, albeit declining from 1.30x to 1.06x. However, the Health/Tech sector's DSCR weakened from 0.61x to 0.24x, and the Entertainment sector's DSCR dropped sharply from 4.99x to 0.62x. Similarly, the Real Estate and M&D sectors also saw declines, albeit marginally, from 0.43x to 0.39x and 0.83x to 0.75x, respectively.

With a lower DSCR and significant increases in the current portion of long-term debt over the period (See Table 1) several companies may look to refinance or roll maturing debts. In late 2024, when the Bank of Jamaica (BOJ) and other central banks began cutting rates, it sparked optimism that companies might be able to refinance maturing debts at favourable rates. However, there are concerns of inflation risks that have been sparked by U.S. protectionist policies and have prompted the BOJ to pause its rate-cutting cycle as it assesses the impact on imported inflation. If rising inflationary threats delay additional rate cuts this year, companies may have to refinance their debt at higher rates than desired. That said, even if companies have to refinance at higher rates,

4 This is an NCBCM Composite of small cap stocks in health and tech sectors. I Constituents include LEARN, ELITE, GWEST, MDS, 1GS, LAB, TTECH

5 Between 2020 and 2024, PJAM's Debt increased by 88% to \$25.84Bn while equity increased by 185% to 26.81Bn.

6 GK's equity rose from \$32.77Bn to \$45.22Bn, and JPG's equity increased from \$5.70Bn to \$11.26Bn

7 EBITDA/Interest Expense

shareholders can still benefit if project returns significantly exceed debt servicing costs. Companies in the Real Estate, M&D and Entertainment sectors that are strategically borrowing to invest in high-return projects can grow EBITDA significantly to service their debts and generate a significant surplus for shareholders. However, other companies, especially in the Health/Tech sector, will have a steeper hill to climb, considering their string of annual losses.

Over the review period, there has been a notable rise in debt reliance among non-financial companies listed on the JSE, particularly within the Real Estate, M&D and Health/Tech sectors. Many firms have managed to maintain healthy interest coverage ratios due to strong EBITDA growth. But with lower DSCRs and the surge in long-term debt coming due and rate cut uncertainty, several companies may need to refinance at potentially higher rates than anticipated. But as companies continue to strategically use debt for growth initiatives, they'll need to do so without compromising their financial resilience and generate enough returns to pay lenders and reward shareholders. This would allow debt to fulfil its purpose as a powerful tool for value creation.

Current Portion LTD (J\$Bn ⁸)	CY2020	CY2024
Conglomerates	16.95	44.49
M&D	16.29	48.49
Real Estate	1.11	0.91
EMI	2.54	3.94
Entertainment	0.28	4.81
Tourism	0.00	0.11
Health/Tech	0.04	1.20
Total	37.16	102.65

Foreign Exchange Market

For the week ending April 11, 2025, the Jamaican dollar remained relatively flat against the US dollar, with the USD selling rate decreasing slightly from J\$158.64 on April 4, 2025, to J\$158.53 on Friday's close. This was due to the BOJ's intervention in the market, where it sold US\$90Mn to counter the strong demand for the US dollar by end users at around JMD\$157/USD\$1.

Selling	Close: 04/04/25	Close: 11/04/25	Change
J\$/US\$1	\$158.64	\$158.53	(\$0.11)
J\$/CDN\$1	\$113.00	\$113.40	+\$0.40
J\$/GBP£1	\$205.79	\$207.94	+\$2.15

Global Bond Prices

Despite softer inflation data, U.S. trade policy developments continued to disrupt global financial markets. The trade dispute between the United States and China intensified last week, with Beijing imposing a 125.0% tariff on all U.S. goods. These measures have triggered significant disruptions in global financial markets, with 10-year U.S. Treasury yields exhibiting heightened volatility. According to Chinese officials, the tariff ceiling has now been reached, and further escalation is considered "economically unviable." As a result, markets are closely monitoring the Federal Reserve's response, as several Fed officials are scheduled to speak on the potential economic and inflationary impacts of the ongoing trade tensions.

Meanwhile, inflation data surprised to the downside. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) unexpectedly fell 0.1% in March, the first monthly decline since May 2020. According to the median forecast, the CPI was expected to rise 0.1% at the end of the first quarter. Year-over-year (YoY), consumer prices rose 2.4%, a tenth of a percentage point less than expected and the second month of cooling following four consecutive months of acceleration. At 2.4%, this marks the smallest annual gain in six months. At the end of the week, the Producer Price Index (PPI) also fell unexpectedly to 0.4% in March following an upwardly revised 0.1% gain in February. March's 0.4% decline marks the largest decrease since October 2023. According to the median forecast, the PPI was expected to rise 0.2% at the end of Q1. YoY, producer prices rose 2.7% in March, significantly less than the 3.3% gain expected and the smallest annual increase in six months.

The bond market reacted sharply. The 10-year U.S. Treasury yield jumped from 4.00% to 4.49%, its steepest rise since the financial crisis, reflecting a mix of market uncertainty, inflation dynamics, and evolving monetary policy expectations. The average loss on emerging-market sovereign dollar debt was 2.9% as at April 9, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. It's a similar picture for corporate debt, with every nation's credit in red, at an average 2.6% loss, erasing almost all 2025 gains. Emerging Market bond prices, especially JAMAN and DomRep bonds, also fell in tandem with yields moving higher, especially in the medium to long-term range. This indicates selling pressure and heightened risk sentiment in the market. This trend aligns with broader global concerns around U.S. trade tariffs and potential knock-on effects on emerging markets.

Bonds	Currency Rating	Indicative Price	Yield	Recommendation
ALSEA (7.75%) 2026	Ba3/Stable	104.00	5.18%	BUY
BAHAMA (6.00%) 2028	BB-/Stable	98.50	6.47%	BUY
BHAMA (6.95%) 2029	BB-/Stable	91.00	8.17%	BUY
BAHAMA 895% 2032	BB-/Stable	97.50	7.60%	BUY

⁸ Source: Capital IQ

Bonds	Currency Rating	Indicative Price	Yield	Recommendation
BAHAMA (6.63%) 2033	BB-/Stable	104.00	8.22%	BUY
BERMUD (4.75%) 2029	A2/Stable	102.75	3.96%	BUY
DOMREP (5.5%) 2029	BB/Stable	100.75	5.28%	BUY
DOMREP (8.625%) 2027	BB/Stable	106.25	5.29%	BUY
DOMREP (5.95%) 2027	BB/Stable	104.00	3.58%	BUY
DOMREP (6.95%) 2037 (NEW ISSUE)⁹	BB/Stable	102.25	6.67%	BUY
GEOPARK (8.75%) 2030	B+/Stable	88.50	11.97%	BUY
GM (5.40%) 2029	Baa2/Stable	102.25	4.84%	BUY
JAMAN (6.75%) 2028	BB-/Positive	105.50	4.77%	BUY
JAMAN (8.50%) 2036	BB-/Positive	121.00	5.86%	BUY
KINGAIR (6.75%) 2036	BB/Stable	102.25	6.47%	BUY
LTMCI (7.88%) 20230	BB/Stable	100.00	7.87%	BUY
MARGRO (6.404%) 2029 (NEW!)¹⁰	BBB-/Stable	103.75	5.46%	BUY
NFLX (5.88%) 2028	A/Stable	107.50	3.61%	BUY
NFLX (4.875%) 2030	A/Stable	103.75	4.06%	BUY
NRG (6.00%) 2033	BB+/Stable	101.00	5.84%	BUY
NRG (6.25%) 2034	BB+/Stable	102.75	5.87%	BUY
PYPL (2.85%) 2029	A-/Stable	96.00	3.84%	BUY
SFC (5.30%) 2028	BBB/Positive	101.50	4.77%	BUY
TPHLTT (9.00%) 2029	Ba3/Stable	105.50	7.48%	BUY
TRAJAM (5.75%) 2036	BB-/Positive	96.75	6.15%	BUY
BANORT (5.75%) 2031	Baa2/Positive	99.00	1.39%	SELL

⁹ Issuer- Govt. of the Dominican Republic, Industry- Sovereign, Type-Senior Unsecured, Callable-Yes, Coupon Rate- 6.95%, Coupon Payment- Semi-annually, Maturity- March 15, 2037, Risk Profile - **Moderate**

¹⁰ Issuer- Marex Group PLC., Industry- Financial Services, Type-Senior Unsecured, Callable-Yes, Coupon Rate- 6.404%, Coupon Payment- Semi-annually, Maturity- November 4, 2029, Risk Profile - **Moderate**

Bonds	Currency Rating	Indicative Price	Yield	Recommendation
CSOLNO (6%) 2027	B+/Stable	16.75	444.52%	SELL
NFE (6.5%) 2026	Caa1/Negative	77.75	26.25%	SELL

GOJ Globals

Ticker	Maturity	Bid	Offer Yield*
JAMAN	2028	101.15	6.13%
	2039	110.75	6.74%
	2045	109.00	7.03%

*NB: The rates quoted above are opening indicative levels on the international market and are subject to change as market conditions vary throughout the trading session. Additionally, the prices quoted to clients of NCB Capital Market Limited (NCBML) are adjusted to reflect the costs associated with completing the transaction on the respective client's behalf.

Local Corporate Bonds

Name	Maturity	Coupon	Price	Yield
BDHR	2027	6.50%	100.35	8.02%
SJPC	2032	8.15%	102.50	8.37%
PBS	2025	8.85%	100.85	6.03%

Money Market

Last week, liquidity in the JMD money market decreased, as measured by the aggregated current balances held by Deposit-Taking Institutions (DTIs). As at April 11, 2025, the total aggregate current balance amounted to J\$64.62Bn, marking a 7.91% decrease compared to the previous week.

Demand for money market instruments was strong, as evidenced by the oversubscription of its weekly 30-day Certificate of Deposit (CD) Auctions as well as the BOJ's T-Bill offering. The average yield on the 30-day CD Auction continued to climb, closing at 5.72%, from 5.58% in the previous week. Total bids received amounted to J\$50.04Bn relative to the offer size of J\$27.0Bn, implying a bid-to-offer ratio of 1.79x. The previous week's lower ratio of 1.49x was due to its higher offer amount of J\$42.0Bn.

The results of last week's T-bill auction continued to reflect strong demand for money market instruments. Both the 91-day and 182-day tenors, each offering J\$700.0Mn, recorded robust bid-to-offer ratios of 5.24x and 5.59x, respectively. The settlement date for the auction was April 11th.

Dates to watch this week

■ International ■ Local

April 2025				
MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI
14	15	16	17	18
JSE – Dividend Payment (\$0.30)	PBS 9.25% – Preference Share Dividend Payment (US\$0.23125/share) PBS 10.50% - Preference Share Dividend Payment (J\$25.89/share)		INDIES – Dividend Payment (J\$0.135) SVL – Dividend Payment (J\$0.0455) SGJ – Dividend Payment (J\$0.44)	
	UK- Unemployment Rate (Feb)	EUR - Core CPI (YoY) (Mar) EUR - CPI (YoY & YoY) (Mar)	US - Initial Jobless Claims EUR - ECB Interest Rate Decision	

Recommendations

Ticker	Closing Price (April 14, 2025)	P/E	Avg. Sector P/E	Current Recommendation
TJH JA	\$3.68	9.5x	14.5x	BUY
GK JA	\$73.26	8.7x	13.2x	BUY
CAR JA	\$15.60	12.2x	12.9x	BUY
HONBUN JA	\$8.10	17.2x	21.2x	BUY
SVL JA	\$20.29	29.8x	11.7x	BUY

Regional News

US Tariffs Add Uncertainty to Bank of Mexico Inflation Outlook

Most of the Bank of Mexico's five governing board members agreed that the risks associated with U.S. President Donald Trump's tariffs will add uncertainty to the future path of inflation, minutes of its March 27 monetary policy decision showed on Thursday, April 10, 2025. Inflation forecasts remain uncertain, the board members noted in the minutes, adding that although the balance of risks for the trajectory of inflation remains biased to the upside, it has improved. "The changes in economic policy by the new U.S. administration have added uncertainty to the forecasts," the minutes noted. "Its effects could imply inflationary pressures on both sides of the balance." Mexico's annual inflation rose in March to 3.80% up from 3.77% in February but remained within the central bank's target range of 2% to 4%, notwithstanding closer to the upper bound. Despite the increase, the central bank's inflation forecasts remain unchanged, and board members still expect headline inflation to converge to the target in the third quarter of 2026. At the same time, Board members pointed out that with uncertainty around U.S. trade policies, there was now also a greater possibility of a further exchange rate depreciation and further economic weakening. Banxico, as the central bank is known, delivered a unanimous 50-basis-point interest rate cut to 9.00% last month, highlighting progress on inflation but warning of heightened uncertainty relating to trade tensions and a weakening economy. Some board members mentioned that weakness in the Mexican economic activity "is expected to have deepened in the first quarter of 2025." A first-quarter contraction would mark a technical recession, after the economy shrank in the fourth quarter, its first quarterly contraction since the pandemic. One board member underscored that the effects of the uncertainty resulting from U.S. tariffs were already reflected in an additional weakening of the Mexican economy.

Source ~ Reuters

US Recognizes Panama's Sovereignty Over Canal, Panama Says After Talks

Panama announced on Wednesday that the United States has reaffirmed its recognition of Panamanian sovereignty over the Panama Canal, even as both countries deepen military cooperation amid concerns

about growing Chinese influence in the region. U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, on the first Pentagon visit to Panama in decades, described the canal as "key terrain" and emphasized that its security would be a joint effort between Panama and the U.S.—not China. His remarks follow U.S. President Donald Trump's claims that China holds sway over the canal, an assertion Panama strongly denies. Though the U.S. and Panama released joint statements on enhanced security cooperation, only Panama's Spanish-language version explicitly referenced its sovereignty over the canal—an omission from the U.S. version that drew attention. Speaking before his departure, Hegseth affirmed U.S. respect for Panamanian sovereignty and praised the country for allowing rotational joint exercises, though Panama reiterated it would not permit permanent U.S. bases. The Panama Canal remains vital to U.S. trade, handling over 40% of U.S. container traffic—valued at around \$270 billion annually. Hegseth's visit comes amid reports that the Trump administration is reviewing military options to secure long-term U.S. access to the canal, which was handed over to Panama in 1999. Trump has called the transfer a bad deal and hinted at possible military responses to Chinese involvement. Panamanian President Jose Raul Mulino has emerged as a key U.S. partner, recently withdrawing Panama from China's Belt and Road Initiative and backing Trump's border security efforts. Hegseth praised Mulino's stance, framing the partnership as critical in countering China's regional ambitions.

Source ~ Reuters & Fitch Connect

International News

Trump Trade Team Chases 90 Deals in 90 Days

President Donald Trump's administration has set an ambitious goal: securing 90 trade deals in 90 days. But early signs suggest that reaching swift resolutions in the ongoing trade war will be far from easy. On Monday, European Union trade chief Maros Sefcovic will be among the first foreign officials to visit Washington for urgent talks on the steep tariffs Trump announced on April 2. The EU, one of America's largest trading partners, recorded nearly \$1 trillion in two-way trade with the U.S. last year. However, Sefcovic's arrival comes at an awkward time—Trump's lead negotiator, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, will be in Buenos Aires, not Washington, attending meetings in support of Argentina's economic reforms. That's despite the fact that U.S.-Argentina trade totals just \$16.3 billion annually. His absence

has raised concerns among trade experts about the administration's capacity to manage such a high volume of parallel negotiations and the feasibility of the 90-deals target. Wendy Cutler, former chief negotiator at the U.S. Trade Representative and now head of the Asia Society Policy Institute, noted that comprehensive trade agreements typically require significant preparation and time—something that may be in short supply under the current timeline. Still, the White House remains confident. Trade adviser Peter Navarro insisted that Bessent, along with U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer and Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, could get the job done. He added that Trump would act as the final decision-maker on all deals, personally reviewing each agreement before it's finalized. The 90-day countdown was triggered this week when Trump announced a temporary pause on many of the new tariffs, following a sharp selloff in financial markets driven by fears of recession and inflation. The pause, he said, is meant to give countries time to negotiate bilateral deals with the U.S.

Source ~ Reuters

Trump Spares Smartphones, Computers, Other Electronics from China Tariffs

The Trump administration has granted tariff exclusions on smartphones, computers, and other electronics—most of which are imported from China—offering significant relief to tech companies like Apple that depend heavily on overseas manufacturing. In response, China announced that it is evaluating the impact of the move. The Ministry of Commerce described it as a small but positive step, and called on the U.S. to go further by removing all remaining tariffs. On Friday, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection agency published a list of tariff codes now exempt from import duties, retroactive to 12:01 a.m. EDT on April 5. The list covered 20 product categories, including the broad 8471 code, which encompasses computers, laptops, disk drives, and automatic data processing equipment. Also exempted were semiconductor devices, memory chips, flat-panel displays, and related equipment. Although no official explanation was provided, the exclusions offer much-needed relief to tech giants such as Apple and Dell Technologies, as well as other electronics importers. The exemptions also extend to Trump's 10% "baseline" tariffs applied to goods from most countries, reducing import costs on semiconductors from Taiwan and iPhones manufactured in India. When asked about the reasoning behind the exemptions and upcoming semiconductor plans, Trump said further details would

be released on Monday, noting that the country was "taking in a lot of money" from tariffs. It's important to note that these exclusions apply only to the recently increased reciprocal tariffs on Chinese goods, which rose to 125% earlier this week. The previously imposed 20% tariffs on all Chinese imports—linked to the administration's response to the fentanyl crisis—remain in effect. However, a White House official confirmed that Trump plans to initiate a new national security trade investigation into the semiconductor sector, potentially leading to more targeted tariffs. Analysts welcomed the move. Wedbush Securities' Dan Ives called the exclusions the most optimistic development for the tech sector over the weekend.

Source ~ Reuters

NCB Capital Markets Ltd (formerly Edward Gayle and Co.) established in 1968 is Jamaica's oldest stockbrokerage. The company became a part of the National Commercial Bank (NCB) Group in 1994 and a fully owned subsidiary in October 2002. In December 2002, the then Edward Gayle and Co. was merged with another NCB subsidiary, NCB Investments. The products distributed by this combined subsidiary cover the traditional money market product offerings (J\$ and US\$ Repos), primary dealer services, stock brokerage and investment advisory services. Edward Gayle was renamed NCB Capital Markets Ltd. in October 2003.

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