

CAL launches French Caribbean services

Ambassador sees potential for T&T businesses



An air traffic controller directs CAL's inaugural flight safely towards an offloading bay at the Pointe-à-Pitre International Airport in Guadeloupe on Saturday. PHOTO COURTESY CAL

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Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the French Republic to Trinidad and Tobago Didier Chabert, says he hopes Caribbean Airlines' newest routes to Guadeloupe and Martinique will open up major economic opportunities for T&T businesses in those countries.

He made the comment as CAL launched flights to its second French destination, Guadeloupe, on Saturday.

"Guadeloupe and Martinique are export markets for Trinidad. For example, Carib beer is very popular in all of the French Antilles ... Trinidad and Tobago can become a hub in the region for French products and on the other side, Guadeloupe and Martinique can be the entry door for the products of Trinidad and Tobago to (go) in the direction of France," Chabert said after the flight arrived in Guadeloupe.

He said he hopes to welcome a delegation of French businessmen to Trinidad soon and said the local chamber of commerce of Guadeloupe would also be happy to welcome a delegation of T&T businessmen.

CAL CEO Garvin Medera told reporters the airline was pleased to connect Guadeloupe to the rest of

the Caribbean and the airline's network.

He said, "We have invested a significant amount, not just in terms of money but in terms of time. This route has been a long time coming. It's really been a labour of love, going through the regulatory approvals, going through all the civil aviation (processes), et cetera, and even getting the extra aircraft and crew to support it."

According to Medera, the airline has been able to expand post-pandemic by putting in the necessary resources.

Both Medera and Chabert encouraged the public to take advantage of the new connections, with Chabert encouraging students on all three islands to take advantage of the opportunity to take part in cultural exchanges and language immersion.

The aircraft's arrival at the Pointe-à-Pitre International Airport (PTP) just after midday marked the start of a weekly four-flight schedule for CAL via Dominica and St Lucia. After the traditional water cannon salute, officials and members of the media were on hand to greet passengers taking their first steps on the "Butterfly Island."

On Tuesday, CAL also launched a fourflight weekly schedule to Martinique, both non-stop and via Barbados, adding 300 seats to the market. The Guadeloupe route, which goes via Barbados, Dominica and St Lucia, also adds 300 seats to the market. This is the first time CAL is adding the French Caribbean to its network.