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Spain welcomes bank efforts on job cuts, proposes new path



Madrid.—Spain yesterday welcomed efforts by banks to reduce the number of initially planned layoffs after talks with unions, while calling on lenders to explore new paths to profitability.

Comisiones Obreras, Spain's largest financial sector union,

has called for a one-day-strike on Tuesday in protest at plans by Caixabank to cut to cut more than 7,5000 jobs. Spanish Economy Minister Nadia Calvino told a financial event in Santander that she hoped Caixabank and unions will reach an agreement regarding

layoffs. "I appreciate that the restructuring processes are being carried out in a negotiated way, in some cases an agreement has been reached and in others an agreement with the workers' representatives is getting closer," Calvino said.

Let the vaccinated travel, UK air industry demands



● Prime Minister Boris Johnson said yesterday that travellers would face hassle and delays this year if they sought to go abroad because the priority would be keeping the country safe from the coronavirus

THE aviation industry yesterday demanded that Britain removes COVID testing and isolation requirements for fully vaccinated travellers from most countries, a step already being taken in the European Union to help tourism recover.

Airlines UK said in a letter to Transport Secretary Grant Shapps that fully vaccinated travellers from "amber" destinations should be exempt from the 10-day isolation requirement, while those coming from both "amber" and "green" countries should not need to have expensive PCR tests.

"Given the incredible efficacy of vaccines and their critical role in easing domestic restrictions, we believe that the framework can safely be adjusted to provide a pathway

for vaccinated people to travel without restriction, alongside steps to reduce restrictions for green and amber categories, making them more proportionate for travellers," the group said.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said yesterday that travellers would face hassle and delays this year if they sought to go abroad because the priority would be keeping the country safe from the coronavirus.

Data confirming that vaccines are more than 90% effective against hospitalisation from the fast-growing Delta variation should be considered when measures that apply to each tier of Britain's traffic light system for travel are reviewed on June 28, it said. "This effectiveness has been recognised by Europe, which is now opening its travel and leisure markets by introducing

waivers from testing and isolation requirements for fully vaccinated persons, including arrivals from major markets such as the United States," it said.

"Today 32 countries exempt travellers from quarantine and 27 from testing if fully vaccinated. The failure to adopt a similar approach risks the UK falling further behind the EU's reopening of international travel, including the critical trans-Atlantic market.

Popular European holiday destinations for Britons, including Spain, Portugal, France, Italy and Greece, are currently rated "amber", which require returning passengers to take three COVID-19 tests and isolate for 10 days on return.

The 11 countries and territories rated "green" require two tests for passengers, including those who are fully vaccinated.

UK rules out ditching 'triple lock' pledge on pension increases

London.—Britain is not planning to ditch its promise to protect annual state pension increases with a so-called 'triple lock', Prime Minister Boris Johnson's spokesman said yesterday.

British newspapers have reported that the government was looking at suspending the promise to increase pensions by whichever is higher of consumer price inflation, average earnings growth, or 2.5%. They said it could help pay for the cost of the government's COVID-19 response.

"We are committed to the triple lock," the spokesman said, when asked about the reports.

Due partly to distortions from the coronavirus pandemic, annual wages in the three months to April grew by an annual 5.6% - creating an extra 4 billion pound (\$5.5 billion) annual cost for future pensions. The promise to maintain the system for increasing pensions was in the Conservative government's manifesto of pledges ahead of the 2019 election. The spokesman also ruled out income tax rises. "There was a promise made at the election that we would not raise rates of income tax and when we stand by that," he said.