

Pan finally has a home

BY SEAN NERO

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SIXTY YEARS, after the creation and development of the steelpan, technological and professional advances have contributed to the recognition of Trinidad and Tobago as the knowledge centre for pan — the national musical instrument — finally has a home.

So said Pan Trinbago president Patrick Arnold in his address at a ceremony to hand over instruments of ownership of a parcel of land at Orange Grove Industrial Estate last Saturday, on which a building will be erected as a "monument to pan."

Pan Trinbago received 8 acres of land valued at TT\$8.5 million from government on behalf of stated-owned Caroni (1975) Limited.

"Anyone who has followed the evolution of the pan will know the tremendous sense of accomplishment we feel at finally acquiring real estate.

Given our history of tenancy and the vagaries of perennially being on the wrong side of the lease the government of Trinidad and Tobago, with the handing over of this parcel of land to the custodians of the national musical instrument marked a significant relationship between us.

"My predecessors Arnim Smith aptly dubbed our office on Queen Street, 'The Rat



TIME TO LAUGH: Prime Minister Basdeo Panday (left) Culture Minister Ganga Singh (centre) and Pan Trinbago President Patrick Arnold are in a laughing mood. PHOTO BY AZLAN MOHAMMED

Hole.' We moved to better looking, but eventually cramped accommodation at Edward Street.

After that property was destroyed by fire, we became somewhat nomadic, with offices strewn like satellites around the capital city," he stated.

Arnold added, that pan is now universally accepted as legitimate music, shedding the exotic image of natives drinking rum and beating drums under coconut trees.

Concomitant with that advance, he said, was the global requirement for efficiency in dealing with requests for assistance in steelband matters and

day to day administration.

"The pan factory and the chroming plant will be included at this location and it is our hope that our proposal for funding will be met with favourable response. According to Finance Minister Gerald Yetming in his budget speech for 2002 funds have been identified and earmarked for this project.

"A very successful meeting of representatives of steelband associations from Europe, the United States of America, Canada and the Caribbean, demonstrated the critical role that our country plays in the universal development of

pan and in particular in the area of academics and entertainment. We see the state playing a major role in the formulation of cultural policy and in particular as it affects the steelpan," said Arnold.

The Pan Trinbago president lauded the contribution of Caroni 1975 Limited for this tangible gesture of recognition and for making it possible for "us to hold not just a key to the front door of a proposed building, but an even larger key, one we are confident will open fresh opportunities for the national musical instrument and by extension the country of its origin."

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