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Make more out of steelpan — Minister

By DAVID CUFFY

PAN, the national instrument, has not been used enough to address the problems facing the nation's youth or other wider issues in the community.

"Statements have been made over the years about the need to use the many, many positive aspects of the steelband to help in solving many of the problems confronting our young people," acting Minister of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs, Kamla Persad-Bissessar, said recently.

"However, when you look at the serious problems facing the youths of our nation today, we cannot really say that in this context we have done all we can to utilise the pan to assist in this regard."

She added: "Whilst all of this is happening at home, the recording industry worldwide is

making use of our pan music in some of their hit tunes. Fusion is taking place with pan and other instruments, and the jazz circuits are buzzing with magical notes of the pan. I wonder how many of our local panmen benefit from these developments?"

The Minister said the creativity, dedication, production and discipline of the pan-nist in creating a productive livelihood should be an example to be followed instead of waiting on "handouts and patronage."

She submitted that Panorama can be seen as "the product of a totally disciplined group of dedicated individuals, motivated by a spirit of creative power to produce a music that is unsurpassed anywhere else in the world, and of which we in TT can be truly proud."

Another question to be asked, she went on, was whether in all this

exciting development, panmen from the real home of the steelpan were being marginalised.

In an effort to maintain our leadership in steelband music, we

should not behave as if "some sort of mystique or magic binds the pan to us," she warned.

The harsh reality, she said, was that others were adopting the pan and making money

with it.

Later, speaking in her capacity as Minister of Legal Affairs, Bissessar said her Ministry, which has the responsibility for copyright and intellectual

property laws, is in the process of reviewing those laws in relation to the rights of the artistes.

"In conjunction with the Ministry of Community Development,

Culture and Women's Affairs, we will be looking very closely at the whole question of the use of our intellectual property; namely the steelband, the product of the masqueraders,

and the product of the calypso," she said in an address at the recently-held Panorama prize distribution and awards ceremony at the Central Bank Auditorium, Port-of-Spain.



PERSAD-BISSESSAR ... positive aspects