

Govt reaffirms support for pan

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THE STEELBAND Movement was on Wednesday night reassured of government's commitment to the improvement of the national musical instrument.

Acting Culture Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar was high in praise for the instrument and its players and asked her audience to "stop bickering and concentrate on making pan the truly national symbol of our aspirations".

Persad-Bissessar was, at the time, delivering the feature address at the Central Bank Auditorium, during the Pan Trinbago Awards Ceremony for bands

successful in this year's Carnival competitions.

She was also standing in for the substantive minister, Senator Daphne Phillips, who is currently attending a meeting of Central American Culture Ministers in Nicaragua.

Describing pan musicians as persons dedicated to the highest levels of discipline and productivity, Persad-Bissessar noted the special factor of team spirit evident in every band, "in a society where sometimes self-promotion and egotism is the order of the day".

She however lamented the lethargy in utilising the lessons available from the steelband experience, as a way of dealing with some of the wider issues in the community.

Lessons from pan, she argued, could be applied as possible solutions for problems facing the nation's youth, including the high level of indiscipline in schools. She described as "paradoxical", our apparent inability to

transpose the productive qualities of the panyard to the home, the workplace and the classroom.

"There is an alarming rate of social disaster in many homes", she said adding "it seems that instead of using this creativity, dedication, production and discipline to create a productive livelihood, many of us are content to wait on handouts and patronage".

Swiftly changing hats to represent her regular Ministry of Legal Affairs, she promised Pan Trinbago and all steelband lovers that government will soon be reviewing laws relating to copyright and intellectual property "and 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 calypsonians".

Congratulating the winners in this year's competitions and paying tribute to Len "Boogsie" Sharpe and Jit Samaroo (for the skilful inclusion of chutney music in his arrangements), she however noted the absence of females at the upper end of the steelband movement.

Also speaking on Wednesday night were Pan Trinbago President Owen Serrette and Chairman of the National Carnival Commission Roy Augustus.

The short ceremony which began punctually at 7.30 p.m., went smoothly, but for one vociferous interruption, in the form of a protest from veteran pan tuner Lincoln Noel, who complained that his name had not been mentioned during the course of the evening.

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