

# Diaz looks back at first year in office

As he approaches the end of his first year as president of Pan Trnabago, Keith Diaz's only concern is that the Pan In Schools initiative, so far, has not received an allocation for continued funding from the new Government.

"I am hoping that we will be able to continue with the project here at home, since there are ongoing Pan In Schools programmes in 30 countries around the world," he said.

"I have been trying to contact the Culture Minister to know the status

of the programme, but have had no luck so far?"

In 1999 a group of school teachers with a deep interest in the development of the steelpan, came together to form the Pan in Schools Coordinating Council (PSCC). The past ten years of the organisation's history has had a significant impact on the formal introduction of steelpan into the classroom.

In 2000 the PSCC, along with the Ministry of Education, hosted teachers from 99 primary schools, 33 sec-

ondary schools and members of the pan fraternity in a Consultation to Introduce Pan in Schools.

As a result, the PSCC developed a document proposing the creation of a Pan in the Classroom Unit (PICU) in the Ministry of Education. This proposal was fully endorsed, and now the PICU has the mandate to administer the establishment of steelbands in all schools.

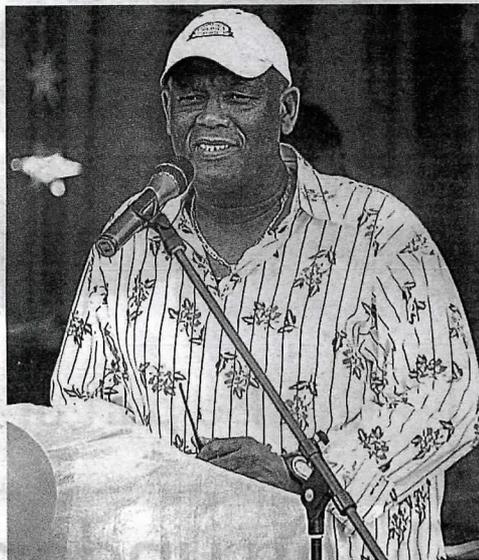
Diaz, however, has expressed satisfaction with the way steelband matters are being handled under the stewardship of the new executive of Pan Trnabago.

He pointed to the increase in the number of finalists that participated in last year's Panorama Competition, including a record-breaking seven bands from the sister isle Tobago, and the increase in prize money on offer as major incentives to the large number of young men and women that contribute to the annual competition.

A gala awards ceremony at the National Academy for the Performing Arts (NAPA) during observance of Steelband Month last August was a ground-breaking achievement, as well as the first-time hosting of a BadJohn Day, that won kudos from Nalis for the unique content of the undertaking.

"While some people were skeptical of our paying tribute to 'badjohns', the reality is that they are part of the steelband history and should never be excluded," said Diaz.

"Those guys were, in effect, the defenders of the steelband to whom we owe a debt of grat-



Keith Diaz...Pan Trnabago president.

itude for the roles they played in its development?"

A new concept in stage décor for the Pan In The 21st Century and Pan Down Memory Lane competitions, as well as an increase in funding from the sponsor TSTT were also seen as items worthy of mention.

Formation of a tuners guild is well underway with some 38 members already registered, and a blueprint for a health plan for steelbandmen has been completed.

In addition, Maureen Manchook has been appointed to chair the board of Pan Instruments Ltd, the organisation's pan manufacturing company, while former UTC director Clarry Benn is the new chairman of its investment company, Panveco.

Pan Trnabago is also reaching out to its distressed members. Eighty-three-year-old pioneer

Franklin "Fisheye" Olivierrie was the recent recipient of a wheelchair and financial assistance for his medication.

A hearing aid was purchased for Anthony Reid, and the family of the late Cecil "Malik" Harewood received help with his burial expenses.

"I expect to see great things happening in the organisation with you in charge," Fisheye told Diaz.

"I am proud to see the steps being taken to move Pan Trnabago forward. This is the organisation that will bring peace to this country, so you have a lot of work still to do."

Diaz said he was looking forward to next year's Panorama, as Pan Trnabago was planning a number of innovations all designed to provide a richer experience for fans attending its shows for Carnival 2011.

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