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Pan bands get \$2.5m Govt aid

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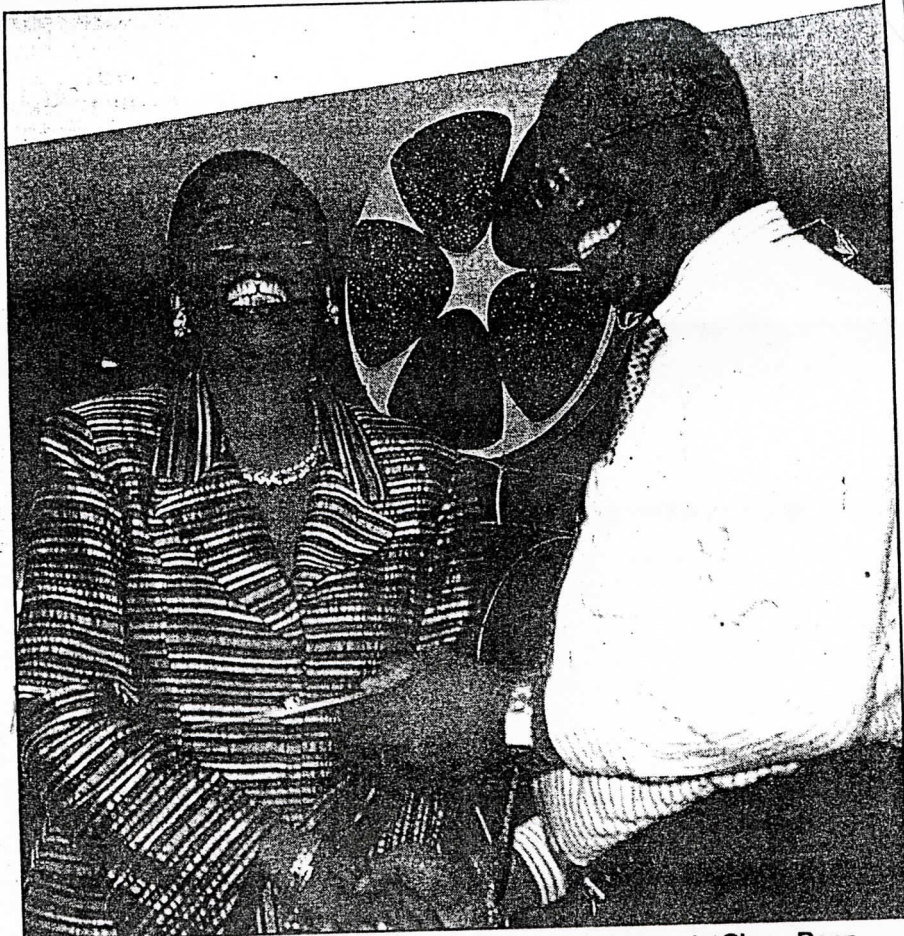
APPROXIMATELY 157 unsponsored steelpan bands have been presented with cheques to help in preparations for this year's Panorama competition.

Presenting the cheques to representatives at Queen's Hall in St Ann's yesterday, Culture Minister, Joan Yuille-Williams, said it was necessary to displace the bands from their normal competition grounds this year in order to facilitate the construction of a new facility at the Queen's Park Savannah.

Government handed out a total \$2.5 million to the bands.

If construction work goes according to schedule, Yuille-Williams said, there is no reason why the competition should not be able to return to the Savannah by 2008, to brand new facilities which will be fully covered.

Thanking all present for their co-operation in ensuring the smooth continuation of the competition this year, Yuille-Williams said the semi-finals would be held



Culture Minister, Joan Yuille-Williams, presents a cheque to Clarry Benn during yesterday's presentation ceremony for unsponsored steelbands at Queen's Hall, St Ann's.

in the North, while the finals will be in South—thus satisfying persons from both ends of the country.

Calling on corporate Trinidad and Tobago to once again support panyards across the country, Pan Trinbago president, Patrick Arnold, said financial contributions have drastically declined over the years.

Responding to queries that certain bands will be boycotting the King and Queen of the Band competition to be held at the Jean Pierre Complex, as some of the costumes are too big to enter into the facility, chief executive officer of the National Carnival Commission, Clarence Moe, said officials intend to "widen the gates of the Jean Pierre" to facilitate the costumes.