



DIRE STRAITS

By Ben Turok



Prof Ben Turok

Pravin Gordhan, the minister of cooperative government and traditional affairs (COGTA) and a man known for his competence and integrity, speaks in this issue about the work being done to tackle municipalities that are badly served by officials. He is clearly disturbed about corruption, wrongdoing and inefficiencies in public service, especially at local government level.

Our economy is in dire straits. Growth per capita as a percentage of GDP is zero. The Treasury is struggling to meet stringent financial targets while performance in our mining,

manufacturing and agriculture sectors is well below its potential. Unfortunately, the unions are in recess as far as political issues are concerned, civil society organisations are fragmented and largely ineffective, and business has no coordinated voice.

We understand that corruption is associated with political patronage, cronyism, and the wide discretion that officials are given in supply chain management. Malpractice is ignored and tainted officials not dealt with, even as whistleblowers are left unprotected and dismissed from their jobs. The press regularly draws our

attention to scandals in the state-owned enterprises, in government departments and even in parliament.

Is the poor performance of the economy linked to poor governance? Although this is hard to measure, it would be surprising if the current electricity supply crisis were not a function of inappropriate appointments and changes of top management at Eskom.

We cannot allow our splendid history of struggle to end in a whimper of self-pity. *New Agenda* will continue to raise critical issues and press for an escape from the current stagnation. **NA**