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BUDGET 2013

Boost for school infrastructure backlogs

Mud structures and unsafe facilities in line for a revamp

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SCHOOL infrastructure backlogs, programmes aimed at improving numeracy and literacy, and the preschool sector are set to be the major gainers in this fiscal year.

When delivering the Budget yesterday, Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan announced that a total of R233 billion would be spent on education, sport and culture.

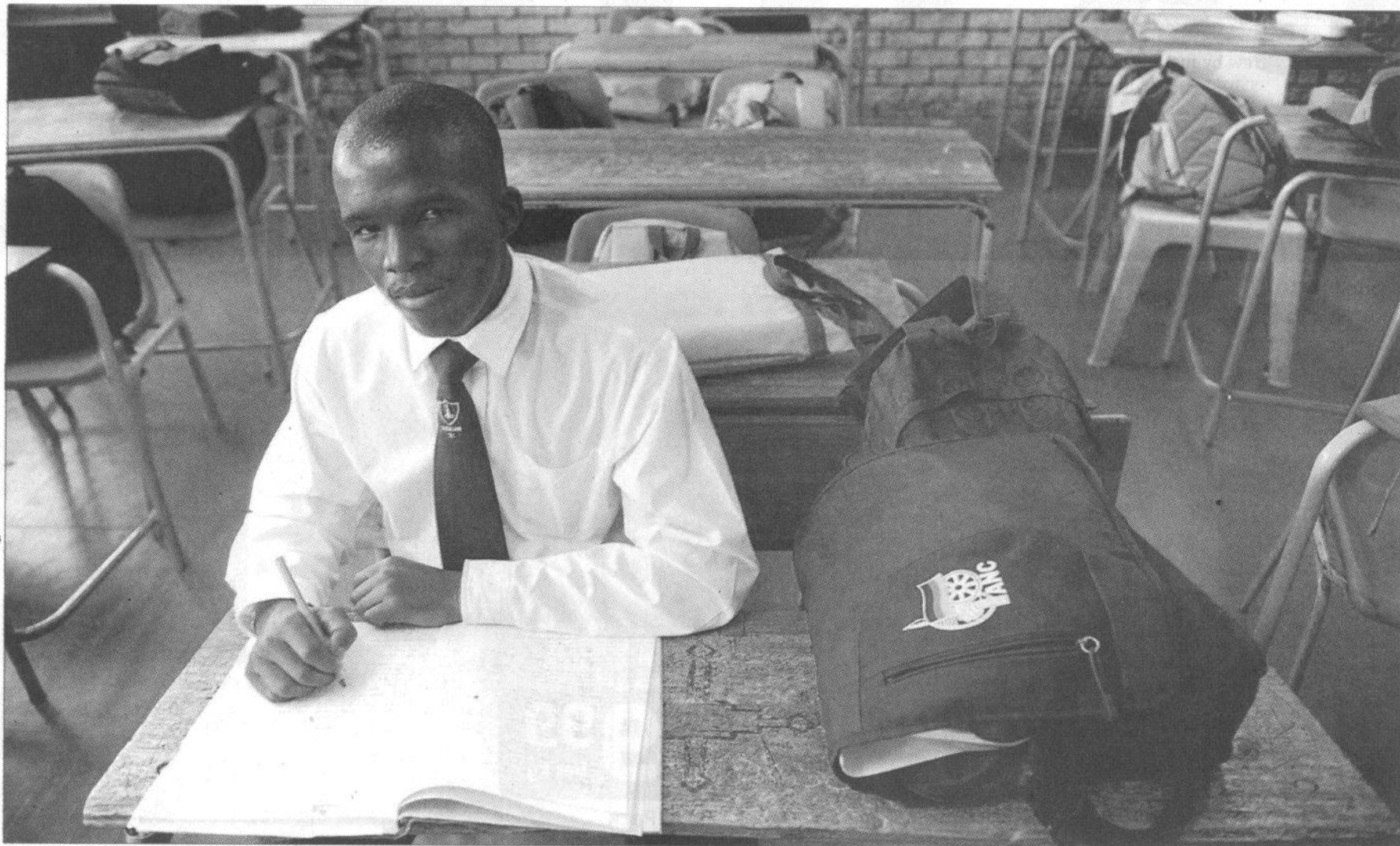
He said R8bn has been allocated to the school infrastructure backlogs grant that was introduced last year.

"Together with the broader education infrastructure grant, R23.9bn is available to provincial education departments for infrastructure over the next three years – but they must spend that money," he said.

The school infrastructure backlogs grant aims to get rid of "inappropriate" school infrastructure such as mud schools and other unsafe structures. It is also aimed at ensuring that all schools have basic services such as water, sanitation and electricity.

Over the medium term, the funding allocated to this grant will be used to:

- Replace inappropriate infrastructure in 496 schools – 395 of which are mud schools;
- Provide water to 1 257 schools, sanitation to 868 schools and electricity to 878 schools;
- Replace 143 inappropriate schools with new schools between the 2013/14 and 2014/15



UPBEAT: Chumani Mafuna, of Senaoane High School in Soweto, is happy technical high schools will be benefiting.

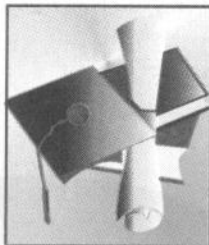
PICTURE: ITUMELENG ENGLISH

financial years; and

- Replace 203 inappropriate schools between 2014/15 and 2015/16.

Gordhan revealed that an additional R698.6 million has been set aside for the technical secondary schools recapitalisation conditional grant, which is set to build and refurbish technology workshops and classrooms.

Under this grant, 31 new workshops will be built, 228 workshops refurbished, 267



workshops provided with equipment and 1 538 technology teachers trained.

Chumani Mafuna, a Grade 12 pupil at Senaoane High School in Soweto, was happy that funding has been allocated for developing technical high schools.

"We have quite a number of technical high schools which have been neglected in the past, and these are the same schools that are supposed to breed

engineers and people with technical skills.

"By neglecting these schools, (the Education Department) has been failing the nation," he said.

A teacher from a technical high school in Soweto, who wanted to remain anonymous, said he was also pleased that funding for technical high schools was being boosted, particularly regarding the training of teachers.

"I'm happy with the funding, but my concern is how this is going to get down to the

people who are going to have to implement the plans on the ground. We often hear about these big announcements being made, but they don't reach the schools on the ground," he said.

Professor Sarah Gravette, dean of education at the University of Johannesburg, said she welcomed the funding intended for improving school infrastructure.

"It's possible to teach in circumstances where not everything is available, but we need the basic infrastructure like

running water, electricity and classrooms. Not luxuries but basics, that will enable a positive environment for teaching and learning," she said.

On higher education, Gordhan announced that funding to higher education institutions has increased from R20.4bn in 2012/13 to R24.6bn in 2015/16.

Gravette said additional funding was needed to assist prospective students who don't have the financial means to study further, as "there are still many, many deserving students who can't go through".