

I'm the man to make the Big Apple blo

RUDOLPH GIULIANI left office as Mayor of New York at the end of December. After two mandates, the mayor of New York, who became a national hero after the events of September 11, left a city in devastation. His rallying call to the citizens of New York to "be strong" helped to bolster badly needed moral. His successor Michael Bloomberg has little room to manoeuvre.

Bloomberg, who took on the official duties as Mayor of New York on January 1, must manage to rebuild a city partially destroyed by terrorism with the menace of bankruptcy snapping at its heels.

The daily panic on the streets has subsided but the economic and social future looks bleak. The US recession coupled with difficulties in the financial sector have ruined the city's fiscal returns while social and infrastructural expenses explode.

"The fall of returns will be much

Siobhan Mulcahy finds the new Mayor of New York in optimistic mood

more important than one imagines," warns Eugene Kerilin, the man responsible for the Budgetary Commission for New York's citizens. "Wall Street is bearing the brunt while the-



Blooming: The new mayor. Picture: AP

atres, restaurants, hotels also suffer."

According to Kerilin, the risks of the financial situation are comparable with the almost-bankruptcy of the early 1970s. By 2002, the deficit

could reach \$6 billion. "This is no longer a problem of accounting," says Mitchell Ross, Professor of Economics at New York University and counsel to Michael Bloomberg.

Meanwhile, the number of unemployed in New York continues to rise. Close to 100,000 jobs have been lost since September 11. This leaves the rate of unemployment in New York at more than 6% far higher than the national average.

"There will be a serious deterioration in the quality of life in the city, not just for poorest, but for everyone," warns David Jones, president of the Community Service Society in New York, an old charitable organisation established more than 150 years ago. Homeless people have made a resurgence on the streets. People lie down to sleep in lines for free meal distribution.

"People who lost their jobs after September 11 and those on low salaries cannot face the cost of life in New

York and don't know where to go," he explains. "They receive a certain amount of help per week, but the minimum price of lodgings is no less than \$800 per month. We do not have a security net for the least-paid workers and they are a million in number," he adds.

According to the Coalition to Abolish Homeless Persons, more than 29,000 people, a record number in the last ten years, have been housed at night in municipal shelters.

There is no doubt that New York has lost its economic substance. The association of traders on Wall Street has lost 45,000 people who decided to leave after the disaster.

Intact buildings remain full of people and big enterprises, too impatient to wait for the clean-up and moving to less expensive, more accessible and less dangerous locations. Those who remain in Manhattan have reduced their personnel. Those who do want to locate in south

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