

## UNDP Bangladesh director quits following staff resentment

Manoj Basnyat, the UN Development Programme's (UNDP) country director to Bangladesh, has quit before the end of his tenure due to a vote of no-confidence from his staff after many of them were laid off.

'His departure comes hot on the heels of a vote of no confidence in him by his staff in a recent survey and several unofficial government complaints about his interference in development projects,' The Daily Star newspaper said Friday.

The UNDP Global Staff Survey 2007 for Bangladesh obtained by the paper showed that '86 percent of international staff and 62 percent of local staff at UNDP Bangladesh had no confidence in their country director'.

UN Resident Coordinator Renata Lok Dessallien told the paper that Basnyat was 'simply being posted somewhere else because he is needed there'.

The newspaper quoted unnamed sources to say that Bangladesh Foreign Adviser Iftekhar A. Chowdhury 'informally discussed' the change of country director with Desallien during a meeting Monday.

A UNDP spokesperson said that the high disapproval rate for Basnyat was a direct result of a radical overhaul of the UNDP offices here, which included sacking or retrenchment of 45-50 percent of the staff.

The organisation undertook the massive changes after competency exams carried out by its New York headquarters found nearly half of the staff in Dhaka were not up to the mark, according to the spokesperson.

The laid-off staff, who had worked for the UNDP for more than five years, received golden handshakes.

Both the government and the UN, however, denied that Basnyat's departure was due to government pressure or the 'survey fallout' within the UNDP.

Basnyat could not be contacted for comment.

Basnyat, currently on leave for three weeks, took up the post of country director of Bangladesh for UNDP in December 2006.

The UNDP spent \$55 million in its development projects in Bangladesh last year.

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