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Founded by M.A. Zuberi

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MPs see PM's role in attempt to convert NARC land into housing society

ZULFIQAR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: Lawmakers in the Upper House of the Parliament on Tuesday hinted at Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's role in malicious attempt made by Capital Development Authority (CDA) to convert 1400 acres National Agriculture Research Council (NARC) land into residential plots.

The civic body had moved a summary to the Prime Minister in March, seeking his approval for demolishing NARC building – the only agricultural research institute – turning it into a residential colony, by not renewing its lease agreement, which could be extended for 90-year.

The lawmakers were speaking on an adjournment motion moved by Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed of Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) regarding proposed conversion of 1400 acres land of NARC by CDA into residential and commercial plots.

Senator Farhatullah Babar of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) said that it had clearly been mentioned in the summary that after discussion with the prime minister, it was being proposed that the NARC land be converted into a housing society.

"Today, somebody has taken the prime minister for a ride like no one else before, but this may no longer be a narrative tomorrow and when the dust will settle down and he (Nawaz Sharif) will no more be the prime minister, the noose will tighten around him," he warned.

Babar said that the experienced bureaucrat, who has been looking

after the affairs of CDA as its chairman, had prepared the summary which could become a charge-sheet for the prime minister in the future, adding that the prime minister must be careful and expose whoever is behind this dangerous game.

He continued that the proposal was far more sinister than a private property tycoon who had reportedly agreed to develop the society without any charges, and in return would have a hold on transaction of all the plots.

"We, the opposition political parties are doing a big favour to the prime minister by pointing out the smart move by a cunning bureaucrat who knows that he may not escape the wrath of law and this was the reason he has put all the blame on the prime minister," he maintained.

Taking part in the debate, Mian Atique of Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) said that the sinister move to convert the NARC land into a housing colony mean the federal government has resorted to "China-cutting" – a terminology used for land grabbers in Karachi, who occupy the state land and then sell it out by dividing it into several pieces.

Mushahid Hussain said that NARC was a research institution which had contributed a lot towards agriculture development, adding that the summary moved by the civic body was a violation of law.

He severely criticized the CDA for its flawed policies and said that it pocketed billion of rupees by launching Pak Enclave some years back, but it was yet to be materialized. "NARC is the pioneer research institute, which had introduced cultivation of some fruits such as strawberry, while bird flue was prevented due to timely action by NARC," he added.

Senator Saeed Ghani lauded the

role of NARC employees for raising voice for saving the institution.

Azam Swati of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) said that lack of research was one of the major reasons Pakistan was behind in agriculture sector. "We are an agrarian economy, as this sector generates 45pc employment while the 24pc contribution to GDP is due to NARC, as it plays an important role in research sector," he pointed out.

Senator Hamza said that converting the NARC would be disastrous for the country, as a plot mafia within the politicians had become very fond of plots that they are now started converting research institutions into housing colonies.

Some senators from treasury benches had nothing concrete to defend the government but mere rhetoric of incompetence due to which the institution had failed to deliver. However, they also agreed to hold a through probe into the matter.

Chairman Senate Raza Rabbani referred the matter to concerned committee of the house which is scheduled to meet on August 13 with directives to report back to the house within one-month.

Senator Seher Kamran of PPP moved a calling attention notice to draw the attention of adviser to prime minister on foreign affairs to explain why the prime minister did not mention the Kashmir issue during his meeting with his Indian counterpart in Ufa, Russian.

Khurram Dastgir Khan, the trade minister said that the Prime Minister Sharif underscored the need to resolve all outstanding disputes with India through dialogue, which means the Kashmir issue is on top of the list. He said that the premier had always highlighted the core issue of Kashmir whether it is UN or any other international forum.

Zong's lucky customers get cars

KARACHI: Zong, Pakistan's No 1 and Only 3G + 4G telecom operator, here on Sunday announced the lucky customers of its blockbuster 'Zong's Mega Recharge Campaign', the winners won a brand new BMW car and two Toyota Corolla cars.

Through this mega campaign, Adil Hussain of Sahiwal has been declared the winner of brand new BMW car, while Ali Asghar of Karachi and Inamullah of Karak have won brand new Toyota Corolla cars. A grand hand-over ceremony was held at Zong Headquarters in Islamabad where these lucky winners received their cars.

'Zong's Mega Recharge Campaign' that took the subscribers by storm was effective from 17th April to 31st May 2015. In order to qualify for the lucky draw for the BMW car, customers needed to recharge Rs 300 or more before 31st May while for Toyota Corolla cars, customers were required to recharge a minimum balance of Rs.200 or more.

Speaking at the occasion, Babar Bajwa, Chief Commercial Officer, Zong said, "Having ones own car is still a dream for many Pakistani's, but through this campaign Zong has facilitated the customers and helped make their dream a reality". "We have ensured absolute transparency throughout the process and feel proud that we deliver what we promise to our valued customers" he added.—PR

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