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PM warned against approving NARC summary

Summary drafted to save CDA
chairman, Babar tells Senate

By A Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Senator Farhatullah Babar of Pakistan Peoples Party on Tuesday warned Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif that the plan to develop a residential colony on the 1,400 acres of the National Agricultural Research Centre (NARC) would create trouble for him in the future.

Speaking on an adjournment motion moved by Senator Mushahid Hussain in the upper house, Mr Babar said that the summary moved by the Capital Development Authority (CDA) was drafted in a bureaucratic style to save its chairman.

"The summary moved by the CDA chairman states that the prime minister has decided to establish a colony over the 1,400 acres land," he said.

Mr Babar said that the summary might not create trouble for Mr Sharif during his tenure, but once he would leave office it would haunt him.

"At the moment, research is being done in the country only in agriculture sector, while CDA had leased the land for 90 years. Moreover, the National Assembly's Standing Committee on National Food Security has recommended stopping any progress on the issue," he said.

Senate Chairman Raza Rabbani said that the standing committee should continue discussion on the issue and submit a report to the house by Sept 13.

Senator Mushahid Hussain of Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid said that the summary for converting the NARC land into plots was sent by the CDA to the prime minister on March 31, 2015 wherein it was suggested that the project director should be hired from the business community.

"It is a clear violation of the Master Plan of CDA and against the national security. Farmhouses in Chak Shahzad have already been turned into mansions so a special committee should be formed to investigate the issue," he said.

Senator Saeed Ghani said that CDA only wants to earn money from the project.

"CDA says that it has no money for the projects although it has been giving a subsidy to the Metro Bus Project. The prime minister should take action against the bureaucrat who gave the proposal," he said.

PML-N Senator retired Lt-Gen Abdul Qayyum said that the NARC was established by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and around Rs100 billion had been spent on it. It will be a disaster to turn the land into plots, he said.

Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Sheikh Aftab said that CDA claimed that the lease was for 30 years which expired in 2005.

He said that in his view the proposed housing colony should not be developed. He suggested that the committee members review the performance of the NARC and on its basis send its recommendations to the PM.

The Senate chairman rejected the proposal to form a special committee and said that the Standing Committee on National Food Security should continue its discussions on the issue.

He said that investigation should be done over five points i.e. terms of reference of the land lease, justification for the use of the land for commercial or residential purposes, shifting NARC, TORs agreed between the CDA and land developers and consequences of the summary.