

## Senate rises to stop sale of NARC land

**Mumtaz Alvi**

ISLAMABAD: Lawmakers across the aisle in the Senate Tuesday fiercely opposed the CDA's proposed conversion of 1400-acre land into commercial and residential plots, and with consensus the issue was referred to the House standing panel for perusal.

National Agricultural Research Centre (NARC) has existed on this land since 1984. Some senators saw in the proposal of CDA summary a deep conspiracy to sabotage Pakistan's largest agriculture research centre and hand over piece of the land to private developers on their own terms.

Majority of senators wanted investigation as to who had initiated this move and called for punishment to him. Senate Chairman Mian Raza Rabbani said he felt proud having watched senators from across the divide and the minister of

state rising above party lines to safeguard and defend a national asset. "The debate has made this parliament proud," he remarked.

He referred the matter to the House standing committee on national food and research, which already had it on its agenda of the meeting, fixed for August 13. The committee would report back to the House in a month from the date of its first meeting.

Without limiting the scope of its working, Rabbani said some questions the committee would take up are: what are the terms and conditions of the lease agreement of CDA with NARC; have these been violated and to what extent was its effect; should CDA take over the leased land and use it for commercial residential purposes; what are the terms of agreement of CDA with the private developers as per its summary and lastly what was the status

of the summary now?

Pakistan Muslim League-Q Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed had moved an adjournment motion in the House last month on the matter and it was admitted for discussion afterwards.

Taking part in the discussion, Pakistan People's Party Senator Farhatullah Babar revealed while referring to a copy of the summary, moved to the Prime Minister by the CDA chairman, that playing smart, he wrote to the Cabinet Secretary that on the basis of an initial decision made by Prime Minister, he was sending a summary to him for its presentation before the competent authority.

"The Prime Minister is an innocent person, who has been taken for a ride in a way that is unprecedented in history," Babar said and asked the Minister of State Sheikh Aftab Ahmad to convey this to the Prime Minister not to approve the CDA summary on 1400-acre NARC land.