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Future of agriculture

PM to decide NARC's fate on return from Belarus

Many have urged the premier to save the research institute

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ISLAMABAD

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will decide the fate of the National Agriculture Research Council (Narc) on his return from Belarus as the research centre is battling for survival after a proposal of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) to convert a large swathe of land into a housing society.

The premier has sought details from the research centre about the usage of its land area after receiving a letter from the National Food Security and Research Minister Sikandar Hayat Bosan, who urged the prime minister to turn down the CDA's proposal to convert the land into a housing society by not extending its existing lease.

The PM has also sought details of the experiments conducted by Narc and its research products along with the rationale behind opposition to the development of a housing society.

Based on the response re-

ceived, he will take a decision on whether to reject or accept the proposal moved by the CDA.

A meeting in this regard is expected to be held by the end of next week as the PM will leave for a two-day visit to Belarus on Monday.

The CDA's suggestion to convert the Narc land into a housing society has generated a heated debate in public and private corridors. Influential property tycoons are believed to be behind the move to take over the prime property in Chak Shahzad - the heart of Islamabad.

The Senate standing committees on cabinet division and national food security and research have called a meeting on August 13 to discuss the issue further. Parliamentarians have urged the PM to avoid any decision that destroys or dislocate a key research institute, which has been developed over a period of four decades.

Farming community has also added its voice, requesting the PM to not take such an unpopular decision, especially at a time when the country is facing challenges of food security and climate change.