

Minister urges PM to decide NARC fate

By Amin Ahmed | 7/23/2015 12:00:00 AM

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research, Sikandar Hayat Khan Bosan has urged Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to decide whether the National Agricultural Research Centre (NARC) should continue to function on its existing land or (the land) be converted into a housing scheme.

In a letter to the prime minister, the federal minister stated that confusion persists for want of the official response to the idea floated by the Capital Development Authority to convert the 1250 acres in Islamabad into a housing society.

At present, the apex agricultural research institution is utilising the land for research purposes.

The copy of Mr Bosan's letter was provided to Dawn on Wednesday, in which the minister had informed the prime minister that 'the decision to convert the NARC into a housing scheme would otherwise be politically unpopular'.

'I have already received strong protests from the chambers of agriculture, Kissan Boards and Kissan Aabadgar organisations'. If the government goes ahead with the housing scheme it will give credence to the propaganda that the government had an anti-agriculture bias, he informed the prime minister.

Mr Bosan said: 'this is not the first time that some shortsighted bureaucrats have hatched this conspiracy against the apex research organisation of the country. The efforts were made during General Musharraf and then PPP's regimes.

Both times, they failed because of very strong reaction from the civil society, and 'I am sure they will fail this time as well,' the national food security minister wrote in his letter.

The minister said when the CDA failed to check violations of Islamabad's master plan; it opted to precipitate the ruination of Islamabad's environment by sending a summary to the prime minister with the proposal to establish housing schemes on Zone-IV.

While the proposal's benefit to CDA can be estimated into few billion rupees, its loss to the environment and beauty of the capital city will certainly be incalculable.

The national food security and research minister informed the prime minister that the CDA had surmised that its proposal would yield Rs100 to Rs150 billion, major portion of which would go to the private developer.

CDA has, however, overlooked the fact that living nations do not put price tags on its national institutions.

'If CDA wants to increase its resources, it should rather look towards its unfinished agenda of developing the residential sectors such as D-12, E-12, Park Enclave and others which are lying incomplete for decades,' he said.

In his capacity being the minister for national food security and research, Mr Sikandar Bosan suggested to the prime minister that the CDA proposal was not legally tenable, as well as the total term of lease is 90 years and not 30 years as has been contended by the CDA in its proposal.