



## SCIENTISTS PLAN PROTEST AGAINST DEMOLISHING OF NARC RESEARCH FARMS

ISLAMABAD  
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**I**N a rare move, scientists plan to hold protest against the Capital Development Authority's (CDA) plan to demolish 1400 acres of research farms of the National Agriculture Research Center (NARC). According to sources, the government is planning to build a mega commercial cum residential scheme in the heart of the federal capital.

Pakistan Academy of Sciences President Dr Anwar Nasim told Pakistan Today on Monday that the CDA has hastily forwarded a summary to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif last week, seeking conversion of the NARC premises including offices, labs and farms into a

commercial and residential scheme.

Dr Anwar remarked that he was dumbstruck on finding out that - by acceding to a mind boggling proposal by the CDA - the government has decided to establish a housing project on the NARC land by demolishing the state of the art research laboratories, sophisticated research equipments, glass houses, fish ponds, animal sheds, machinery sheds, office buildings, and other precious research infrastructure established at a staggering cost of trillions of rupees.

In case this proposal is seen through, CDA will deprive the country of coordination in agricultural research. "We cannot sit idle in this situation. Therefore, the scientist community has decided to rise against this illegal act. We will initially hold a news briefing on June 18. If

the government did not pay heed to our concerns then we won't hesitate to protest and approach the superior courts," Dr Nasim added.

NARC has played a key role in the national food security. The institute's scientists have developed 100 wheat varieties and pre-empted countless rust epidemic since 1978. In doing so, NARC has saved the nation around Rs 2000 billion since 1980. Similarly, the National Reference Lab of Poultry Diseases has saved Rs 90 billion of poultry industry since 2006 by making Pakistan the only bird flu free country amongst the SAARC states. Dr Nasim said that the friendly countries and international organisations have invested trillions of rupees in the developing NARC. "We can't allow its demolition," he added. The concerns of

NARC officials are lent merit by the recent developments in the area where CDA has already started work on a mega-gated community called 'Park Enclave project'. The real estate tycoons have also started developing residential schemes in the area. The utilization of the NARC road on the main park road adjoining Rawal Lake will create a new investment bonanza in the federal capital. In 1975, Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto allotted 1400 acres land area in Islamabad for establishing NARC. NARC is the only federal level agricultural research and development institution. NARC also houses Institute of Advanced Studies in Agriculture. Each year, around 1500 students across the country benefit from NARC labs and field research for their doctorate and Masters programs.