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Pak clamps down on madrassas

Islamabad\Karachi: In a bid to regulate the functioning of thousands of madrassas, Pakistan has approved a new ordinance making it mandatory for these Islamic religious schools to register with the government, without which they will be disbanded and forgo state benefits.

The new ordinance is intended to bring them under the normal educational system of the country, federal information minister Nisar Memon told reporters after a cabinet meeting on Wednesday.

"One of the objectives of introducing this regulatory mechanism is to control those religious schools which had been subjected to

militancy," he said. Describing the madrassas as a part of Pakistan's culture and tradition, Mr Memon said, "We want to control them."

Madrassas would have to register with the Pakistan madrassa education board and the respective provincial madrassa education boards according to the ordinance, he said.

Any unregistered madrassa would not be permitted to receive grants, donations or aid from any foreign sources or allow admission to foreign students or make appointment of teachers without a valid visa and an NOC from the interior ministry. India has adopted a wait-and-watch policy in its reaction to Pakistan's announcement.

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Religious schools