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Infants Struggle for Survival in Punjab's Failing Hospital Nurseries

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On July 25, 2025, reports highlighted significant challenges in Punjab's public hospitals, particularly concerning neonatal care. Many neonatal nurseries are reportedly non-functional, leading to high infant mortality rates. Issues such as broken ventilators, oxygen shortages, and a lack of specialist staff have severely impacted the quality of care for newborns, raising concerns about the protection of infants' right to health.

According to *The Express Tribune*, out of Punjab's thousands of healthcare facilities, only around 270 have operational neonatal nurseries. This shortage forces critical patient transfers, which can be risky and sometimes fatal. Over 270 infant deaths have been attributed to issues including oxygen shortages, malfunctioning equipment, and hospital fires. Dr. Hotiana, a healthcare professional, noted that "high patient volumes and

inadequate facilities in smaller hospitals contribute to elevated neonatal mortality,” emphasizing disparities between well-equipped urban hospitals and rural facilities.

The Punjab government has claimed substantial investment in healthcare infrastructure; however, many nurseries continue to face challenges such as non-functional air conditioning units and ventilators. A vendor supplying oxygen to hospitals reported that delayed payments have disrupted supply chains, further complicating access to essential medical resources.

In response to the situation, the government has taken actions including suspending some medical staff, initiating investigations, and providing financial support to affected families. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has personally intervened, and officials have indicated that a comprehensive policy to improve neonatal care is in development. However, experts suggest that sustained investment and accountability measures are necessary to address the root causes of these healthcare deficiencies.

This situation highlights the urgent need for reforms in Punjab’s public health sector to ensure that newborns receive timely and adequate medical care. Strengthening hospital infrastructure, improving staff training, and ensuring reliable supply chains are critical steps toward protecting the health and rights of the province’s most vulnerable population.