

Transparent. Unbiased. Yours.

Rawalpindi Shopkeepers Halt Sugar Sales Amid Price Dispute

August 18, 2025

— Categories: Economics

RAWALPINDI, Aug 17, A majority of grocery shopkeepers in Rawalpindi district have suspended sugar sales, leading to a sharp increase in retail prices and growing frustration among consumers.

In the inner city, sugar is now being sold at Rs190 to Rs200 per kilogram, while in surrounding areas, prices have touched Rs210 per kilogram. Traders estimate that between 70 to 80 per cent of shopkeepers have temporarily halted sales, despite many still holding stock. Retailers say they are reserving limited sugar supplies for long-standing customers, while refusing ordinary buyers amid fears of heavy fines, challans, and potential shop closures by local authorities.

The shortage has worsened during the Independence Day holidays, when increased consumer demand coincided with restricted supply. As a result, ordinary buyers have been left struggling to purchase sugar at affordable rates.

Salim Pervaiz Butt, President of the Grocery Merchants Association, said that shopkeepers are prepared to sell sugar at the government's official rate of Rs173 per kilogram, but only if wholesalers provide it to them at a sustainable price.

“We are ready to sell at Rs173 if the Deputy Commissioner and Price Control Magistrates supply sugar to us at Rs165 per kilogram,” he explained. “But if shopkeepers are buying sugar at Rs176 in the open market, they cannot sell it below their purchase cost. Our only option left is to stop selling sugar altogether.”

Butt criticised the district administration for failing to ensure a stable supply at the controlled rate. He argued that instead of resolving the wholesale pricing issue, officials were penalising retailers for shortages beyond their control.

On the other hand, authorities maintain that their role is limited to enforcing the official price ceiling. Officials insist that shopkeepers are free to purchase sugar from any available source, but they must sell it at the fixed rate of Rs173 per kilogram. Enforcement measures, including fines, legal notices, and shop closures, have already been applied against those found overcharging.

The standoff has placed consumers in a difficult position, with shopkeepers unwilling to sell at a loss and authorities refusing to relax price controls. Without government action to address wholesale pricing and distribution, market observers warn that the shortage in Rawalpindi is likely to continue.