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Karachi Sugar Supply Halt Sparks Price Hike

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Despite directives from the Prime Minister, sugar is not being provided at the government-fixed ex-mill price of Rs 165 per kilogram. Following fines imposed by authorities, wholesalers in Karachi's Jodia Bazaar have suspended sugar sales, creating widespread disruption in the market.

Chairman of the Wholesale Grocers Association, Rauf Ibrahim, confirmed that the supply has been halted for the past three days. As a result, the retail price of sugar has surged to Rs200 per kilogram.

Ibrahim criticised the local administration, stating that instead of taking action against sugar mills or hoarders, officials are unfairly penalising wholesale traders. A recent survey by *The Express Tribune* reported that, like other cities in Pakistan, Karachi has seen an absence of sugar at government-approved prices, leaving consumers to buy at inflated rates.

Just days earlier, sugar was being sold at an ex-mill rate of Rs171.50 per kg. However, after the imposition of heavy penalties, wholesalers stopped purchasing altogether, disrupting the supply chain and causing a shortage in the wholesale market. This has led to rising prices at all levels, ex-mill, wholesale, and retail.

In response, the Karachi Commissioner launched a citywide crackdown on price manipulation. Authorities fined 87 individuals for profiteering, collecting a total of Rs 1.077 million. Additionally, seven shops were sealed, and two arrests were made.

The wholesale price of sugar has now climbed to Rs190 per kilogram, while retail outlets are charging Rs200 per kilogram. Many residents are urging the administration to take more effective and balanced measures to ensure sugar is made available at regulated prices.

The situation highlights the broader challenge of enforcing price controls in essential commodity markets across Pakistan.