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Karachi Sugar Shortage Worsens as Wholesalers Protest

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Karachi is currently experiencing a significant sugar shortage following the suspension of supply by wholesale traders. This development comes in response to fines imposed by the city administration on retailers accused of selling sugar above the government-fixed price. As a result, the retail price of sugar in Karachi has soared to as high as Rs200 per kilogram, compared to the official ex-mill rate of Rs165.

The suspension of supply began in Jodia Bazaar, one of Karachi's largest wholesale markets, where sugar sales have remained halted for three consecutive days. This disruption

has caused a ripple effect across the city, with many markets running low on sugar stocks and prices climbing sharply.

Rauf Ibrahim, Chairman of the Karachi Wholesale Grocers Association, stated that the government's enforcement measures are targeting small traders rather than holding sugar mills and stockpilers accountable. He explained that fines had been imposed despite the fact that wholesalers were unable to procure sugar at the official rate. According to the association, sugar is currently being acquired at prices ranging from Rs171 to Rs174 per kilogram, which makes it financially unsustainable for traders to sell at Rs165.

An independent survey confirmed that sugar is not being sold at the regulated price in any major Karachi market. The wholesale price has increased to approximately Rs190 per kilogram, while retailers are charging up to Rs200 per kilogram due to limited availability.

In response, the Karachi Commissioner's Office has intensified its enforcement efforts. According to official figures, a total of 87 retailers were fined for overcharging, with cumulative penalties amounting to Rs1.077 million. Additionally, seven shops were sealed and two individuals were arrested for violations of pricing regulations.

Despite these actions, the sugar shortage continues. Many citizens report being forced to purchase sugar at inflated rates or facing empty shelves in local stores. Consumer advocates have called on the government to investigate the role of sugar mills in the crisis and to ensure that mill owners release stock at the official ex-mill rate.

Market observers warn that the situation could worsen in the coming weeks if the standoff between traders and the administration remains unresolved. With religious festivals on the horizon, demand is expected to rise, potentially pushing prices even higher unless corrective steps are taken.

As of now, the Wholesale Grocers Association has not provided a timeline for when sugar supply will resume, leaving consumers and traders uncertain about market stability in the near future.