# Pakistan ramps up pharmaceutical preparedness amid trade suspension with India



Pakistani health authorities have initiated emergency preparedness measures to secure pharmaceutical raw materials and finished medicines following the government's suspension of trade with India, officials confirmed on Friday. The decision to halt trade ties, implemented as a retaliation to New Delhi's actions after the recent attack in Pahalgam, Indian-occupied Kashmir, has raised concerns over the supply of essential medicines in Pakistan.

The Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) disclosed that although a formal government notification detailing the ban's impact on the pharmaceutical sector has not yet been received, contingency plans are already underway. A senior DRAP official, speaking to The News International, explained, "Following the 2019 crisis, we had started preparing for such contingencies. We are now actively looking at alternative avenues to meet our pharmaceutical needs."

Currently, Pakistan imports approximately 30 to 40 percent of its active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) from India, alongside several high-end finished therapeutic products. The disruption of this supply chain has prompted DRAP to explore alternatives from countries such as China, Russia, and several European nations to ensure uninterrupted access to critical medicines. These include anti-rabies vaccines, anti-snake venom, cancer therapies, monoclonal antibodies, and other essential biological products.

Despite these efforts, industry insiders and health experts warn of potential challenges if immediate actions are not taken to address the implications of the trade suspension. A senior official from the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, who requested anonymity, highlighted the dependence on Indian imports: "Pakistan imports some 30–40 percent of its pharmaceutical raw material from India. We also import finished products, most importantly, anti-cancer therapies, biological products, vaccines, and sera, especially anti-rabies vaccine and anti-snake venom from India."

To date, the Ministry of Health has not received an official directive clarifying the status of pharmaceutical imports amid the sweeping trade ban. The sector also faces complications from an existing black market, where unregistered and unapproved medicines—many originating from India—are smuggled into Pakistan through routes via Afghanistan, Iran, Dubai, and across the eastern border. Although these informal channels help bridge supply gaps, they lack assurances regarding quality and consistency.

In response to these concerns, a delegation of pharmaceutical industry leaders travelled to Islamabad on Thursday to request an exemption for the pharmaceutical sector from the trade suspension. Tauqeer-ul-Haq, Chairman of the Pakistan Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association (PPMA), stated, "We had meetings with DRAP and Ministry of Commerce officials to discuss the suspension of trade ties. We urged them to exempt the pharmaceutical sector from the ban, as there are many life-saving products whose raw materials come exclusively from India."

The PPMA delegation also engaged with the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), advocating for the exclusion of health-related trade to safeguard patients' access to essential medicines.

Beyond the immediate response, some experts view the current crisis as an opportunity for Pakistan to boost its local production capabilities in pharmaceutical raw materials, vaccines, and biological products. Dr. Zafar Iqbal, a senior public health expert, remarked, "This crisis could be a turning point for Pakistan. The Dow University of Health Sciences (DUHS) Karachi has already started manufacturing anti-rabies vaccines using Chinese raw materials and is working on anti-snake venom. NIH Islamabad should also be upgraded and given the resources and mandate to meet the country’s vaccine and biological product needs."

The developments underscore the complex challenges facing Pakistan's pharmaceutical sector amid geopolitical tensions and highlight ongoing efforts to ensure the uninterrupted availability of critical healthcare products.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

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