# Pakistan takes emergency steps to secure medicines after India trade ban



In response to the recent suspension of trade relations with India, Pakistani health authorities have initiated emergency preparedness measures to safeguard the supply of pharmaceutical raw materials and finished medicines. This development follows New Delhi’s restrictive actions against Pakistan after the attack in Pahalgam, Indian-administered Kashmir, prompting Islamabad to retaliate with a trade ban.

The Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) confirmed on Friday that, although it has not yet received formal directives from the government regarding the pharmaceutical sector's trade restrictions, contingency plans are underway. A senior DRAP official informed The News International, “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 depends on India for 30 to 40 percent of its pharmaceutical raw materials, known as Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs), and imports various advanced finished therapeutic products, including critical medical supplies. With the trade channel suspended, DRAP is exploring alternative sources from countries such as China, Russia, and several nations in Europe to maintain the supply of essential medicines. These include anti-rabies vaccines, anti-snake venom, cancer therapies, monoclonal antibodies, and other vital biological products.

Despite such efforts, concerns persist within the pharmaceutical sector about potential shortages and disruptions. A senior official from the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, stated, “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.” The official also noted that the Ministry is yet to receive an official notification clarifying pharmaceutical imports' status despite the overarching trade suspension.

Complicating the supply challenges is an extensive black market operating through channels across Afghanistan, Iran, Dubai, and Pakistan’s eastern border, which smuggles unregistered and unapproved medicines of Indian origin. These illicit supplies fill gaps resulting from legal trade disruptions but lack quality assurance and reliable distribution.

Representing the pharmaceutical industry, a delegation visited Islamabad on Thursday to seek an exemption from the trade ban. Tauqeer-ul-Haq, Chairman of the Pakistan Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association (PPMA), said, “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 delegation also engaged with the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), highlighting the necessity of excluding health-related trade from the ban to safeguard patient lives.

In the wake of these developments, some experts suggest the current predicament could prompt long-term strategic shifts in Pakistan’s pharmaceutical manufacturing capabilities. Public health expert Dr Zafar Iqbal 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.”

This unfolding situation highlights the complexities of interdependence in pharmaceutical supply chains and has led Pakistani authorities and industry stakeholders to reconsider approaches to securing essential medical supplies amid political tensions.

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

## References

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* <https://www.deccanchronicle.com/southern-states/tamil-nadu/pak-trade-suspension-not-to-have-any-impact-1875129> - Details Pakistan's reliance on importing pharmaceuticals and Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) from India, noting the significant value of these imports and highlighting the blockade's impact on pharmaceutical raw materials.
* <https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/business/indian-exports-have-little-to-lose-from-pakistans-decision-to-snap-trade-ties-say-experts-13004644.html> - Discusses the estimated volume of pharmaceutical imports from India to Pakistan (including APIs and finished products) and mentions alternative unofficial trade routes through third countries, corroborating the article's point on smuggling and black-market activities.
* <https://economictimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/india-pak-trade-miniscule-now-will-come-to-complete-halt-exporters/articleshow/120588161.cms> - Reports on Pakistan's earlier suspension of trade ties with India in 2019 following India's import tariffs, providing context to the current trade suspension and ongoing trade restrictions including in pharmaceuticals.
* <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/pakistan-suspends-trade-with-india-effect-on-india-to-be-minimal-101745522580535.html> - States that Pakistan imports pharmaceutical raw materials and finished goods from India and that the suspension will mainly affect Pakistan, corroborating the concerns about pharmaceutical supply disruptions.
* <https://www.dawn.com/news/1456255> - Reports on Pakistan's pharmaceutical sector efforts to find alternatives to Indian APIs and drugs, including exploring supplies from China and other countries, matching the article's description of DRAP and pharmaceutical industry initiatives.
* <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMixwFBVV95cUxQZFV6WHFxQ3FjVF9IQkFYaTdnV0NMWTE0am5hZmJBU0Jsa2tqZzFfa3VsVjNHakxfTF9FXzhoSnpoZkUwTWZXSy1xelJCR29YdUpJb3YzQjN3Q183dFA2eVJmb2pld3hDRHdyZTV3eXdRRWNTaFdtTFJhTVlXX01Oc29jZndTSWVJUU94S2FPYVBQN21oNnBuUkVaNkhLYzFaU3YxQUpMMk5fNHVWSF9xa0YzTVI1emFsVDB5WmRRVld6WXFJYTNj?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data