

### **RCCI urges govt to ease lockdown**

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) President Saboor Malik has urged the government to ease lockdown and provide a way to open all businesses under strict standard operating procedures (SOPs).

"Pakistan's economy cannot afford a complete lockdown, nor can it survive mass infections due to its overburdened healthcare system. An out of the box solution can be opted to open businesses on alternate basis either via limited working hours or geo-location basis," said Mr Malik while addressing the eighth executive committee meeting.

He said the business community had lauded Punjab government's recent steps and consultations with respect to the partial lockdown aiming at opening businesses.

"We consider recommendations prepared by Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar regarding opening of business as encouraging," he added.

RCCI has already sent letters to the chief minister, Federal Minister for Commerce Razzaq Dawood, Minister for Planning Asad Umar and Minister for Industry and Production Hamad Azhar regarding the epidemic and lockdown where we demanded that all businesses be allowed to open with strict implementation of SOPs."

He said the chamber was already in touch with Commissioner Rawalpindi Mahmood Ahmed, Deputy Commissioner Anwarul Haq, RPO Rawalpindi Sohail Habib Tajik and other representatives on a daily basis and actively consulting on opening of businesses and devising SOPs.

"If the government consults with stakeholders, we will suggest better solutions," he said. He said the business community would follow the government SOPs.

The RCCI president said in the current crisis the government should announce special incentives for the business community, come up with a long-term relief plan and consult with stakeholders.

He suggested that different working hours could be set for people involved in many businesses such as wholesale.