

Rawalpindi Launches PKR 470M Bazaar Upgrade Plan

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The Rawalpindi Municipal Corporation (RMC) has approved a PKR 470 million project to upgrade and pedestrianize a key stretch of Raja Bazaar, one of the city's busiest commercial centers. The scheme, covering the section from Fawara Chowk to Hamilton Road, will begin after 12 Rabiul Awal, following the Chehlum of Hazrat Imam Hussain (AS) on August 14.

The initiative is being carried out jointly by the district administration, Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA), RMC, and other departments. Authorities said the project is designed to make the historic marketplace more accessible while improving public facilities.

The development plan includes benches, public washrooms, improved signage, landscaping, and the restoration of heritage buildings. A major component involves relocating utilities underground. The Islamabad Electric Supply Company (Iesco) will undertake underground cabling for PKR 200 million. Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) and Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL) have each been allocated PKR 30 million for utility relocation, while the Water and Sanitation Agency (Wasa) will receive PKR 5 million to move water pipelines.

Of the total PKR 470 million, PKR 250 million has been allocated for utility relocation, while PKR 220 million will be used for beautification and infrastructure improvements. Plans also include a revised traffic management system, expanded parking, and the construction of a model market to attract visitors.

Officials said the project had previously faced delays due to changes in underground cabling layouts but confirmed that all approvals are now finalised and work will proceed as scheduled.

The initiative has faced opposition from traders. The Traders Action Committee has demanded that Raja Bazaar be reopened to general traffic by August 15, arguing that road closures and construction are damaging business. Shopkeepers report declining customer numbers, with some vacating rented premises. The committee has warned of possible protests if their concerns are not addressed.

City officials maintain the project is part of a broader plan to modernise Rawalpindi's commercial zones while preserving their historic identity. They stressed that discussions with trader representatives are ongoing and that balancing business continuity with urban development remains a key priority.

The Raja Bazaar upgrade is seen as a major step toward reshaping Rawalpindi's commercial landscape, aiming to improve infrastructure, enhance convenience for visitors, and support long-term economic activity.