

## **TOURISM POTENTIAL IN SOUTHERN AJ&K MIRPUR, BHIMBER AND KOTLI**

The southern AJK consists of Mirpur, Bhimber and Kotli. The Mirpur is a lake side city and offer a beautiful lake to the town. The Mangla Lake is a multipurpose lake i.e. providing water for irrigation purpose and generating electricity to meet the energy requirements of the country. A large number of population of Mirpur, Bhimber and Kotli migrated to United Kingdom for jobs. The people migrated to UK worked hard and ultimately become citizen of UK. Their children were also educated in UK and are playing an important role in the economy of UK. Most of the immigrants have constructed houses at their lands located in these cities. It was observed that in majority of the cases their parents are living in these houses, otherwise they have appointed staff to take care of their property. Over a period of time, a tendency of marriages among people living in UK has developed but still a large number of migrants prefer to marry their children in their native towns.

The temperature in southern AJK during summer is quiet hot. The people living in these areas opt for old places to spend their vacations. In winter, priority is assigned to visit places having snowfall. Thus, south of AJK does not offer the desired potential to attract tourists during summer and winter seasons. The Mangla Lake can be used for water sports. However, it is very deep right from edges and may not be a safe place to allow water sports and related activities. The southern AJK have a great religious tourism potential. It has a number of shrines being managed by the *Auqaf* Department. It is learned that the monthly donations received from pilgrim varies from 0.5 million to 2.0 million. The *Auqaf* Department is providing requisite facilities to facilitate pilgrims visiting these shrines. As the *Auqaf* Department is taking care of the needs of religious tourists, the Tourism Department has no revenues to invest in these shrines.

A number of locations were identified during field visit of Mirpur, Bhimber and Kotli. However, these sites were not considered appropriate for financing by the private sector as the area is hot and tourists have less attraction to visit these places during day time. The historical forts developed by Mughals are also another attraction for the tourists. A visit to the forts indicates that due to lack of maintenance, the forts are almost collapsed and do not offer any attraction to visit.

- **MANGLA LAKE RESTAURANT**

A 05 kanals of land behind police station on the corner of the Mangla Lake have been identified for establishment of a roadside restaurant