

# STAR STUDDED AAI PARAGLIDING WORLD CUP

By: Phal.S.Girota

A galaxy of world's top Paragliders will descent into India for the AAI Paragliding World Cup, the first ever event of the World Tour to be held in India. The week-long event which will see a veritable feast of Aero sports at one of the most natural locations for the sport at Bir Billing, about 40km from Kangra, will see three of the four World's top ranked pilots besides the Top 3 from Oceania-Asia and Top 2 from Africa and one of the most successful woman pilots in the field that has 130 Pilots from over 35 countries.



The event sponsored by Airports Authorities of India, which has taken upon itself to promote and push Adventure Sports in India. The AAI Paragliding World Cup will be held in Himachal Pradesh from October 23 to 31, 2015. with the actual competition starting from October 24. The venue, Bir Billing, is referred to as "Paradise for Paragliding". is considered one of the best launch sites in the world.

While announcing the participation of the world's best 130 pilots, including an Indian team of seven pilots, the organizers also unveiled the customized AAI Paragliding World Cup trophy and the mascot, which is Snow leopard, the state animal for Himachal Pradesh. A range of colourful merchandise to be worn by the Indian national team and also to be sold at the event was also released.

Mr. R.K.Srivastava, Chairman, Airports Authority of India, said, "We are extremely pleased to be associated with the Paragliding World Cup. Adventure sports has become hugely popular among youth. We plan to start with paragliding and take Adventure Sports in India to new level.

Mr. Sudhir Sharma, President, Billing Paragliding Association, and the Minister of Housing, Urban Development and Town & Country Planning, Himachal Pradesh, said, "We want to make it a Festival of Aero Sports with a lot of activities planned around it. Apart from the competitive element, there should also be fun element to attract those who are not in tune to something like paragliding. The state government has developed world-class infrastructure in and around Bir Billing by redoing the takeoff and landing sites and ensuring the state-of-the-art facilities for the paragliders, officials and spectators. This is because we feel that an event like this can be used to promote Tourism and also boost the local economy."

Supported by action film hero Akshay Kumar and the other film personalities like John Abraham, Preity Zinta, Mahesh Bhatt and cricket superstar Yuvraj Singh, the AAI Paragliding World Cup also aims to take the sport across India and promote Tourism through Adventure sports.

During the course of the week, the organizers have also planned daily festivals to showcase tourism and history and culture of Himachal Pradesh and India. Food festivals, information on those wishing to learn and pursue Paragliding will also be made available as the sport grows in the country. One of the highlights of the week will also be Tandem Flights for Children with Special Needs. They will be taken into the sky by experienced pilots and given a unique "Once-in-a-lifetime" experience to empower them and help them enjoy a sport that adds to the sense of freedom for all those who follow it.

