

## **AIRPORTS AUTHORITY OF INDIA**

### **PRESS RELEASE**

**The first-ever Airports Authority of India Paragliding World Cup 2015 at Palpung Sherabling Monastic Seat, Bir Billing, Himachal Pradesh will be inaugurated by the Hon'ble Union Minister of Civil Aviation Shri P. Ashok Gajapathi Raju on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2015 at 1830 Hrs.**

**GAGAN, the GPS based Navigation System developed by AAI & ISRO will be used for accurate navigation and tracking of the paragliders.**

**New Delhi, 21<sup>st</sup> October, 2015:** Preparations are underway on a massive scale in Bir Billing at Himachal Pradesh, where the Paragliding World Cup will commence from October 23, 2015, and go on up-till the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2015. The Billing Paragliding Association (BPA), which has been entrusted to organise the event, is leaving no stone unturned to ensure a memorable experience for everyone.

The Airports Authority of India (AAI) has taken an active interest in organising this event and is the title sponsor of the Paragliding World Cup 2015. AAI has in the recent past been responsible for promoting various Sports in India to help build a sports friendly environment, which is largely untapped.

GAGAN – GPS Aided GEO Augmented Navigation is an India SBAS (Satellite Based Augmentation System) Programme jointly developed by India Space Research Organization (ISRO) and Airports Authority of India (AAI) to implement SBAS over India airspace. AAI has offered to the paragliders to take advantage of GAGAN signals for accurate navigation and tracking facility; for the first time using GAGAN enabled Accord receivers.

About 130 of the best paragliders, including those in World's Top-5, from over 35 countries are set to participate in the championship which will put India firmly on the global paragliding map. During the week-long tournament, the edge of competitive sport during the day will give way for some fun and frolic in the evenings, with themed programmes being planned each evening. The gala opening and the closing ceremonies promise to be extravaganzas, adding their own colour to the World Cup.

Sudhir Sharma, Minister of Housing, Urban Development and Town & Country Planning, Government of Himachal Pradesh, who is also the President of the Billing Paragliding Association, has been closely monitoring the progress of the event. It is a matter of huge prestige for India, that the AAI Paragliding World Cup is being held here. This is a huge shot in the arm for not only the sport of paragliding, but also for the state of Himachal Pradesh and we are working hard to deliver a truly world-class event.

It will boost the sports and tourism activities in the state as international participants, pilots and others will visit the Kangra valley during this championship. Other activities to attract spectators are being organised and it will surely boost the local tourism.

The AAI Paragliding World Cup is a big step in the promotion of Adventure Sports in India. AAI was looking to adopt a sport and this has come at the right time as Paragliding and AAI have a lot of synergy through aviation. This can take Adventure Sports to the next level. The Paragliding World Cup, which is being held for the first time in India, heralds a new era for Aero Sports in India.

Bir Billing, the Paragliding Capital of India is situated on the foothills of the Himalayas, in the state of Himachal Pradesh. Bir, is a world-class destination for outdoor enthusiasts and thrill seekers. It is considered the second best site in the world for paragliding by international paragliding pilots, the launch point is located on the top of a ridge at Billing, at an elevation of 2400m, while the landing area leads into the western edge in Chowgan, a Tibetan colony.

The Bir Billing valley can be reached through winding roads of tea gardens and is surrounded by mountains of the Dhauladhar Range. The valley is named after a Scottish officer, Captain Billing, who served the British Empire during the pre-independence era. The ornate monasteries built by the Tibetans in the area add to the landscape around Bir and are worth a visit. Because of its vegetation and climate, Bir is considered nature's marvel and a haven for bird watchers.

The views are impressive with a backdrop of 5500mt peaks on one side, and the plains of India stretching out on the other. The village of Bir is an easy-going and relaxed place, the lower part of which hosts the colourful Tibetan colony, with several beautiful monasteries and a friendly and relaxed Tibetan lifestyle.

Come...enjoy the natural beauty of Himachal along with the adventure of the sport.

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