



PARAGLIDING ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

(Registration no.: 500/Goa/2010)

Nizari Bhavan, 5th Floor, Menezes Braganza Road, Panaji, Goa 403 001.
Tel: +91-832-2431192 / 93 base@pgaioi.org www.pgaioi.org

Press Release

October 6, 2010

Ban on Paragliding activities after CWG advisory

DISCLAIMER:

This release is with respect to media reports claiming temporary ban on aero-sports activities in the state of Himachal Pradesh during the Commonwealth Games following a Civil Aviation Ministry advisory. As of today, there is no official proof or copy of this advisory note from the Civil Aviation Ministry made available by the local administration in public domain.

As representative of Paragliding Community in India, **Paragliding Association of India** would like to bring to notice some points to everyone - pilots, laymen and the authorities alike.

SECURITY OF THE NATION

Considering the security of the nation to be paramount, the PG community would extend all its support to ensure the community is with the nation in all respects when it comes to security.

SUPPORT

Although the ban is reported to be limited to an area within 300 km radius from New Delhi, the administration has extended the ban to Bir-Billing in Kangra district, Manali and other parts of Himachal Pradesh that lie more than 380 radial kms away from New Delhi. The locals here extensively depend on Paragliding. The sport and the tourism associated with it brings source of livelihood for many, especially in the season of October-November, which is the most busy month due to suitable flying conditions in the area. The foreign tourists flock to Bir-Billing to make the best of these conditions. In the Western Countries weather conditions are not conducive for flying during this time of the year.

The sentiments of foreigners and we Indians are alike and share the same concerns. On one hand we are promoting sports and culture through CWG with a lot of vigour. We also project our country as developed and advanced in sports activities. At the same time we are suppressing another sport without knowing the facts and lack of understanding about the same.

THE FACTS AND THE RUMOURS

As much as there is utmost concern about security by the authorities, the PG community completely understands the repercussions of the same. The perception of many that Paragliders can be very easily and comfortably used to launch aerial attacks, is flawed. Just because one can be airborne does not mean that aerial attacks can be carried out easily. Paragliding is an extremely technical sport and needs years and years of practice and understanding even to travel short distances, subject to the proper terrain and weather conditions. Without all this, even the best paragliding pilot will never be able to get airborne, leave alone travelling distances. Flat-lands - like the ones in and around Delhi, make it even more difficult to fly distances under normal conditions.

ILL EFFECTS

Many foreigner pilots, Indian pilots and enthusiasts have personally written to PAI expressing their concerns and disappointment over the ban since they, and so many others like them, had made plans very well in advance to visit India and fly here. The message is clear - the sequence of events that have happened over last two consecutive years, the aftermath and the loss that many have had to incur has made everyone 're-think' their perception of India/Bir-Billing/Himachal Pradesh - being one of the best destinations for Paragliding.

The State Government has ambitious plans to hold National Open Championship for Paragliding in Bir-Billing in end of October 2010. If the State Government upholds this ban, not too many pilots would be motivated to participate in the event due to the ban and lack of practice. This is also incidentally the same site where Paragliding World Cup qualifier events have been organised more than once in the past.

The loss of livelihood for the locals and the damage to the State's image of a tourist destination following this ban is extensive. At the end of the day, it would be the State that would be at loss and also the Nation's image taking a hit.

WHAT CAN BE DONE

Considering the fact that the Government does not even recognise this sport, for the nation and the authorities to know, this is the same sport in which India's top-brass pilots ended the Asian Paragliding Championships with a podium finish, winning a Bronze for 3rd place as a team. They made the Nation proud by standing on the podium with the Indian flag raised high with respect.

- The extension of the ban to include Bir-Billing, Manali and other parts that fall far outside the 300 kms radius should be revoked. Only areas that lie within the 300 kms radius should be covered under the ban.
- The extension of the ban up to the 20th of October in spite of the fact that the Common Wealth Games get over by 14th October is baseless. This too should be revoked and ban imposed only till 14th October limited to the 300 kms radius.

- Preparation for CWG event has been going on for several months. Obviously the security threats and strategies to deal with have also been discussed for a long time. So why announce this ban at the 11th hour! This could have been done months in advance to avoid inconvenience to thousands.
- The authorities should consult the experts in this field to understand and discuss the true potential of this sport as a threat, prior to pressing the panic button and banning the sport. The representatives of PAI would be happy to liaise with the government in this regard for the mutual benefit of all concerned.