



2017 Dakar: All the preparations completed on site

- Great atmosphere during the podium crossing in Paraguay
- Scrutineering and administrative checks completed

In just a few hours, the competitors finally will start into the first stage of the 2017 Dakar, taking them from Asuncion, Paraguay, to Resistencia, Argentina. The MINI John Cooper Works Rally and MINI ALL4 Racing pairings just can't wait for the action to begin and the rest of the team also is happy that the waiting is over. Yazeed Al-Rajhi tries to take it easy, during these final hours. "Following the demanding practice and the long flight I will try to relax to then be ready to really go for it," the Saudi reveals. Meanwhile, Mikko Hirvonen admits that his approach is completely different. "These day always are the worst for me, says the Fin, "I don't want to wait. I want to get behind the wheel and go racing."

On Sunday morning, X-raid completed the final preparations: on Friday and Saturday, all the pairings completed their shakedowns outside of Asuncion. On a track featuring a distance of about seven kilometres the MINI pairings could execute the final adjustments on their vehicles while getting themselves in the racing mode at the same time. Then, on Sunday, the entire team had to pass the administrative checks. During these checks, the organisers examined all the documents and handed on important information. The administrative part was concluded by the 'virtual' entry into Argentina. To be able to execute tomorrow's border crossing faster, the Paraguayan and Argentinean authorities already put their stamps on the documents.

Afterward, the Dakar organisers, the ASO, scrutineered the racing cars. The major part of the scrutineering already had been executed in the run-up to the event but the final checks were done in Asuncion. Afterwards, the cars were taken to the Parc Fermé where they waited for crossing the podium in the evening. And the podium

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crossing demonstrated that the Paraguayans are real motor-racing enthusiasts. Hundredths and hundredths of thousandths came to cheer for the pairings, thus making for a sensational atmosphere at the start into the 2017 Dakar Rally! Even a heavy rainstorm in the middle of the event didn't affect the good mood. "Despite the bad weather thousands of people stood along the track", says Mikko Hirvonen. "Really impressive."

On Monday, the drivers will contest a short 39-kilometre special stage in Paraguay. It will represent a mix of a very technical route and parts reminding of trial tracks. In this special stage, it's particularly important for the pairings to secure good starting positions for the coming days.