



## PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

### APRC ANCOM MALAYSIAN RALLY 2009 KICKS OFF!

**14<sup>th</sup> August, Johor Bahru** – 28 cars were flagged-off this evening by the Crown Prince of Johor, Tunku Ibrahim Ismail Ibni Sultan Mahmud Iskandar Al-Haj at the official opening ceremony for the FIA ASIA PACIFIC RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP (APRC) ANCOM Malaysian Rally 2009 (MR9). 6 entries were for the MR9 and 22 entries were for the third Round of the local Malaysian Rally Championship (MRC) which is held concurrently.

The rallies will be held in the oil-palm plantations of Kota Tinggi, Johor. All competitors will aim to complete 16 Stages over 227.70klms across the weekend. The longest Stage is 24.46klms and the shortest is 3.09klms.

Cody Crocker of the Motor Image Racing Team, who is the defending APRC Champion and currently placed first in the points tally, will lead the charge into the Stages early tomorrow morning (Saturday). The Stages have been described as extremely tricky and some of the most difficult the APRC competitors have seen this year.

Following Crocker will be Japanese driver, Katsu Taguchi of the MRF Tyres team and behind him, New Zealander, Emma Gilmour who is Crocker's teammate. Taguchi and Gilmour are placed second and third respectively entering this Round.

At a press conference held earlier today Crocker said the Stages are very challenging but he and co-driver Ben Atkinson will be pushing as hard as possible to win.

"The Stages are new to us this year and there are some very technically demanding roads. We have spent a fair bit of time checking our notes just to make sure that they are all ok, but if it rains it will be a bit of a lottery as to who wins. If we do win it will be very rewarding," Crocker added.

Taguchi reiterated Crocker's comments adding that the course is much more difficult than previous years because the roads are both narrow and tricky.

"We have no choice but to drive fast this weekend because we need to win to have any chance of beating Cody in the Championship," Taguchi said. "Our tyre choice will be very important if it rains," he added.

Emma Gilmour, who is competing in Malaysia for the first time said, "Nobody can afford to make any mistakes. I'm glad we experienced some slippery stages during the recce because now we have a good idea of just how slippery it can be out there."

Gilmour's co-driver in the MR9 is Claire Mole who hails from the UK. Claire replaces Rhianon Smyth who was badly injured in a recent rally accident. When asked to comment on the renewed partnership Gilmour said, "This is our first event back together for a while

and it takes a little while to gel, but it's come together really well and we're looking forward to this weekend's race."

The other APRC competitors include Gaurav Gill from India, Rifat Sungkar from Indonesia and Malaysia's own Karamjit Singh.

Karamjit will compete in the Proton Satria Neo S2000 as part of the Proton R3 Malaysia team. Karamjit is excited to back in the APRC after a five year break but does not have high expectations for this weekend's race.

"We haven't had much time with the car, only about 25 kilometres, so it's going to be a learning curve for us. The fact that the car is left-hand drive is another handicap for me," Karamjit said.

The Proton Satria Neo S2000 finished 4th overall at the Intercontinental Rally Challenge (IRC) in Russia recently, driven by two-time British rally champion Guy Wilks. The Proton R3 Malaysia team is hoping to improve on the car's performance and technology but putting it through the extreme conditions that come with motorsports.

The MR9 is the fifth of seven APRC Rounds. The last two Rounds will be held in Indonesia (3-4 Oct) and China (14-15 Nov).

### **HEATED BATTLE IN LOCAL CHAMPIONSHIP (MRC)**

With Karamjit and Jagdev driving up front in the APRC, it is expected there will be a fierce battle for second place between the MRC competitors in the 4WD category.

There are eight drivers in contention including Gunaseelan Rajoo and Lohitt Urs (India) of the GSR Pennzoil Racing Team, Saladin Mazlan and Rozali Abdullah of the Felda Rally Team, Arjun Rao (India) and Muhammad Rafiq.

In the 2WD category, 'Mike' Ariokiasamy Ratnam and Jamaluddin Tukimin, are expected to finish strongly.

The official prize giving ceremonies will be held at the ZON Hotel, Johor Bahru on Sunday 16 August at 3pm.

All the details are at [www.malaysianrally.com](http://www.malaysianrally.com). APRC Points and driver profiles for the APRC can be found at [www.fiaaprc.com](http://www.fiaaprc.com)

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