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APRC: ŠKODA celebrates its fifth consecutive title – Gill wins Drivers' Championship a round early

- › **Rally Malaysia: Gaurav Gill celebrates his fifth season win at the fifth round of the FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC) and adds a second drivers' title to his 2013 trophy**
- › **Ahead of the season finale in India: ŠKODA can no longer be beaten in the Manufacturers' Championship**
- › **Michal Hrabánek: "Extremely important triumph for the ŠKODA brand and our FABIA R5"**

Johor Bahru, 30 October 2016 – ŠKODA has good reason to celebrate at the Rally Malaysia: the successful Czech car maker has secured its fifth consecutive manufacturers' and drivers' title in the FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC). On top of that, India's Gaurav Gill has already claimed the drivers' trophy in the prestigious continental championship with his fifth season win in the fifth leg of this season's APRC. It is his second drivers' cup, having won in 2013. This means that the ŠKODA MRF team already has the most important titles in the bag ahead of the grand season finale in Gill's native India from 3 to 5 December.

"The fact that we have secured our fifth consecutive title in the APRC a round early is testament to the quality of the team. The Asia-Pacific region is a key market for ŠKODA, so this is an extremely important triumph for the ŠKODA brand and our FABIA R5. Whether we were competing in searing heat on the edge of the Gobi Desert in China, after a typhoon in Japan or now in the difficult conditions in Malaysia – we were fast and demonstrated the quality of ŠKODA vehicles in front of tens of thousands of fans," commented ŠKODA Motorsport Director Michal Hrabánek.

Old hand Gill (34) was rejoined by his usual co-driver Glenn Macneall (AUS) at this event and was the measure of all things once again at the Rally Malaysia. He initially fought it out with the second ŠKODA MRF duo, Fabian Kreim/Frank Christian (D/D), during the first five stages on Saturday, held around the city of Johor Bahru in the blazing heat. Then, Kreim – who recently won the German rally – made a mistake and was unable to continue that day due to a technical problem. He returned on Sunday, however, and put in five best times on the muddy tracks to finish in the overall ranking in third place. This gave the German driver his fifth podium position in the APRC during his first season on gravel.

Meanwhile, APRC expert Gaurav Gill took the top spot on the podium for the fifth time this year. "Although we won comfortably in the end, it was hard work. At the Rally Malaysia, you don't just fight it out with the other teams – you fight it out with the difficult conditions at the rally itself too. But our ŠKODA MRF team did a fantastic job



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again," said Gill, who was delighted at having wrapped up the championship title before the end of the season: "It's a dream to claim a second title in the APRC, having won in 2013. Back then, I won with the FABIA SUPER 2000, this time it's the FABIA R5 – the ŠKODA cars are just incredibly good. I'm already really looking forward to the season finale in my native India, where I can start the event as the champion." It is the fifth time in a row that a ŠKODA driver has won the APRC, following victories by Chris Atkinson (AUS/2012), Gill (2013), and works drivers Jan Kopecký (CZ/2014) and Pontus Tidemand (S/2015), who were both competing in the British leg of the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2) this weekend while the Rally Malaysia was under way.

ŠKODA also has an unbeatable lead ahead of Subaru in the APRC Manufacturers' Championship. This latest title was partly thanks to the talented 24-year-old Fabian Kreim and his co-driver Frank Christian. "We're absolutely delighted that ŠKODA has won the title. Congratulations to Gaurav Gill, who deserved to win this championship title with a strong performance. This year's APRC taught me an unbelievable amount about driving on gravel, which was previously unknown territory for me." Kreim is in second place in the overall APRC standings.

The number of the Rally Malaysia: 14

The ŠKODA FABIA R5 was the standout car once again at the fifth leg of this season's APRC. The Rally Malaysia was made up of 14 stages covering just over 230 kilometres, and the high-tech four-wheel-drive from the Czech Republic was unbeatable on every section. Winner Gaurav Gill claimed the best time on eight stages and his team-mate Fabian Kreim was the fastest driver six times.

FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC)

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>
Rally Whangarei – New Zealand	29.04.–01.05.2016
Rally Queensland – Australia	18.06.–19.06.2016
Rally Zhangye – China	05.08.–07.08.2016
Rally Hokkaido – Japan	23.09.–25.09.2016
Rally Malaysia – Malaysia	28.10.–30.10.2016
Rally India – India	03.12.–05.12.2016

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ŠKODA at the APRC rally in Malaysia

Five out of five: Gaurav Gill has won every leg of this season's APRC so far. His regular co-driver Glenn Macneall joined him again in Malaysia.

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA at the APRC rally in Malaysia

After encountering technical problems, Fabian Kreim/Frank Christian managed to secure their fifth podium finish in their first season at the APRC.

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ŠKODA Motorsport Overview:

ŠKODA has been on the motorsport scene since 1901. Be it on the circuit or in rallies, ŠKODA has celebrated victories and won titles all around the world. Historical highlights include numerous title wins in the FIA European Rally Championship (ERC), the FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC) and the Intercontinental Rally Challenge (IRC), as well as the victory in the European Touring Car Championship in 1981. ŠKODA teams have also triumphed in the world's oldest and most famous rally, taking several class victories in the legendary Monte Carlo, which was first held in 1911.

In 2015, ŠKODA celebrated four victories in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2) with their new ŠKODA FABIA R5 rally car. The high-tech 4x4 was homologated by the International Automobile Federation FIA on 1 April 2015. In the ŠKODA FABIA R5's very first season, factory duo Pontus Tidemand/Emil Axelsson (S/S) secured the fourth APRC title in a row for ŠKODA. In addition, the brand claimed five national titles with their new winning model.

ŠKODA's new FABIA R5 proudly continues the brand's long tradition in motorsport. Its predecessor, the FABIA Super 2000, was the most successful model in ŠKODA's 115-year motorsport history. With the 4x4 from Mladá Boleslav, factory duo Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (CZ/CZ) achieved the historic feat of becoming the first duo in history to win the drivers' title in the ERC and the APRC in consecutive years. Between 2009 and 2014, ŠKODA FABIA Super 2000 drivers won a total of 50 national and international titles around the world.

In 2016, the factory teams Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (S/S), Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler and Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (F/F) are competing with the ŠKODA FABIA R5 in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2).

ŠKODA AUTO

- > is one of the longest-established vehicle manufacturers in the world. The company was founded in 1895 – during the pioneering days of the automobile. Today, the company's headquarters remain in Mladá Boleslav.
- > currently offers the following models in the range: CITIGO, FABIA, RAPID, OCTAVIA, YETI, KODIAQ and SUPERB.
- > in 2015 delivered more than 1 million vehicles to customers worldwide.
- > has belonged to Volkswagen Group since 1991. The Volkswagen Group is one of the most successful vehicle manufacturers in the world. ŠKODA, in association with the Group, independently manufactures and develops vehicles, as well as components, engines and gear transmissions.
- > operates at three locations in the Czech Republic, produces in China, Russia, Slovakia and India mainly through Group partnerships, as well as in Ukraine and Kazakhstan through local partners.
- > employs over 26,600 people globally and is active in more than 100 markets.