

Mishra takes charge

Engine trouble scuttles Suresh Rana's plans



Dusty trails: Aabhishek Mishra (co-driver Venu Rameshkumar) negotiates the tricky sandy terrain on Wednesday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

DESERT STORM

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Strategies sometimes fail. But for Suresh Rana (co-driver P.V.S. Murthy) of Team Maruti Suzuki Motorsport it failed big time. The defending champion decided to take it easy and was nicely cruising through the stages before his engine let him down in the third leg of the Maruti Suzuki Desert Storm 2018 here on Wednesday.

In the second leg the other day, the five-time champion attacked the stages and took everybody by surprise by even getting past the riders. It looked for a moment

that he was in total command but Aabhishek Mishra (V. Venu Rameshkumar) did one better to finish on top. Rana rubbed it off saying that he played it cool and had reserved his best for the third leg.

It was the longest rally stage, about 199kms to be precise, and it did test the skills of both the riders and the drivers. Rana was expected to pass the test pretty easily.

He had been doing that for some time now but engine issues cut short his journey midway through and it came as a huge blow to the team.

Meanwhile Aabhishek,

who had a 40-second edge over Rana at the start of the day, went through some anxious moments as well when his car got stuck in the sand.

"It took us about ten minutes but we managed to bring it home comfortably," said Venu, his co-driver from Coimbatore.

"Tomorrow is pretty crucial as we have both the day and the night stages. We want to play it cool all the way," he added.

The results (provisional): Second leg: Xtreme: 1. Aabhishek Mishra (Venu Rameshkumar) 03:44:07; 2. Suresh Rana (P.V.S. Murthy) 03:44:45; 3. Raj Singh Rathore (Sagar Mallapla) 03:53:11.