

Rajiv, Senthil upbeat about Asia Road Racing Championship

Buriram (Thailand) (IANS): Rajiv Sethu and Senthil Kumar will go for their best performance at the familiar Chang circuit when the third round of the FIM Asia Road Racing Championship 2019 (ARRC) gets underway here from Saturday.

This weekend 'IDEMITSU Honda Racing India' - the solo Indian racing team from Honda 2Wheelers India -- reached here, where Asia's best riders will vie for top honours.

Leading the ARRC charge in Asia Production (AP250) class is the experienced Rajiv.

After sweeping double digit points for the first time in Australia, Rajiv is being viewed as a serious contender in the 2019 championship.

Compared to his 27th position last year, Rajiv is already in the

top 12 with 18 points so far in the AP 250 class of championship.

Backing Rajiv up will be his teammate Senthil.

Marking 2018 as his debut year at the Thai Talent Cup, Senthil showed promising results at the Chang International Circuit last year.

In his debut ARRC year, Senthil has already won two points and is all charged up to push the throttle in Chang, an international circuit where he has the benefit of prior racing experience.

The Indian duo of Rajiv and Senthil will be racing with 25 of Asia's top riders from Indonesia, Thailand, Japan, Malaysia, Vietnam, Taipei and India in the Asia Production 250cc class.

The competition will intensify further with the introduction of

the new Balancing Various Motorcycle Concepts rule.

The new rule was created for greater equality among competing motorcycles and balance the rider performance of the top 5 riders in the overall championship.

After two rounds, top riders of AP 250cc class Aiki Iyoshi (Japan) and Andy Muhammad Fadly (Indonesia) will be the first to achieve the first equaliser (500 rpm reduction) while rounding up the top three of the AP 250cc class is wonder woman Muklada Sarapuech from A.P Honda racing, Thailand.

"I am both mentally and physically charged up for this round. With the support of complete IDEMITSU Honda Racing India team and my coach Mr. Koyama, Australia gave me momentum

and now I want to re-write history by aiming for a podium at Chang - the circuit where I scored my first ever international points. My target is not top 10 finish, I want to push hard and surprise everyone even more this round," Rajiv said.

Entering his third ARRC round and the first track where he has ridden before, Senthil said, "In 2018, Honda gave me my international break in Thailand Talent Cup 2018 which is Honda's development platform for Asian riders. And in 2019, Honda again gave me a bigger chance in Asia's toughest championship.

With the full backing of my fantastic IDEMITSU Honda Racing India team, I am now much more confident on bike handling. Chang is a familiar

track for me. This is my best chance to return to top 15 and eye an even higher finish."

Parallely, the marquee Asia SuperBike 1000cc (ASB) class of ARRC 2019 will see Malaysian rider Zaqhwan Zaidi of Honda Asia-Dream Racing with the SHOWA team (ranked 2nd) return in full form.

The team has top personnel from Honda subsidiaries across Asia and Oceania, including a race technician from India.

This round will also see Honda's teenager rider duo of Mohammad Mikail (ranked 15th) and Kritik Habib (ranked 16th) who made their international debut with the Thailand Talent Cup (Honda's development programme for Asian riders) get a chance to learn racecraft from Asia's best.

Rajiv Sethu (left) and Senthil Kumar