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### APRC in Japan: Fourth win of the season for ŠKODA and championship leader Gill

- › **After the typhoon: Gaurav Gill triumphs at the Rally Hokkaido with his new co-driver Stéphane Prévot and extends his overall lead in the FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC)**
- › **Second ŠKODA duo of Fabian Kreim/Frank Christian complete the one-two result**
- › **Michal Hrabánek: "The ŠKODA drivers and our FABIA R5 can cope with the most difficult of conditions"**

**Obihiro/Japan, 25th September 2016 – Fourth win in the fourth race of the season: Gaurav Gill (IND) won the Rally Hokkaido in the FABIA R5 to move closer to the next title win for ŠKODA in the FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC). The stages in Japan were extremely muddy due to the recent typhoon - but Gill and new co-driver Stéphane Prévot (B) mastered the difficult conditions with the ease of champions. The second ŠKODA MRF duo of Fabian Kreim/Frank Christian (D/D) completed the one-two result, reaching the APRC podium for the fourth time this season.**

"At the last APRC rally in China, we had to deal with extreme heat and desert sands, and this time in Japan we had muddy stages with big potholes. We were able to celebrate a win in the APRC standings on both occasions. This proves that the ŠKODA drivers and our FABIA R5 can cope with the most difficult of conditions," concluded ŠKODA Motorsport Director Michal Hrabánek. "Congratulations to the whole team from ŠKODA MRF. Now we have to continue to work hard and ensure that we don't lose concentration in the remaining two races of the season."

A typhoon with torrential rain had covered some roads on the island of Hokkaido in mud and detritus. However, the Japanese organising team managed to clear all the stages and make them ready for competition in time for the rally to start. Conditions were extremely complicated for the 19 competitors in the APRC - deep puddles and mud made the 220 stage kilometres hazardous and slippery.

Despite this, both ŠKODA drivers were in perfect control of their FABIA R5s. Fabian Kreim took the lead in Friday's first stage, 0.1 seconds ahead of his team-mate Gaurav Gill. However, the 34-year-old Indian driver took command on Saturday and gradually extended his lead - although he had a new co-driver at his side in the form of the experienced Stéphane Prévot (47). Gill's regular co-driver Glenn Macneall (AUS) was competing at a rally in Finland. As proceedings drew to a close Gill/Prévot won the battle of the ŠKODAs, 1:50.6 minutes ahead of Kreim/Christian in second place.



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"Of course I was a bit nervous before the rally, due to the change of co-driver. But everything worked out really well, although we had changed the set-up of our FABIA R5 completely after the last APRC rally in China. So I am really happy with this win," commented Gill.

He has now extended his lead in the drivers' championship after four wins in four races this season and is ideally placed to repeat his 2013 APRC title win. This would mean the fifth consecutive title for ŠKODA in the prestigious continental championship. ŠKODA also moved further ahead of Subaru in the manufacturers' championship. The final two races of the season, taking place in Malaysia and in Gill's home country of India, will be decisive in the title race.

The 23-year-old Fabian Kreim once again proved just how talented he is - gravel rallies are completely new territory for the German driver. "This was my first time here and the conditions were really extreme, with deep potholes and a lot of mud. We can be more than pleased with the fourth podium finish. As always, our ŠKODA FABIA R5 ran perfectly," commented Kreim. He is the clear leader in the Germany Rally Championship (DRM) - and he has the chance to secure his first national championship title at the "3-Städte-Rallye" on 21st and 22nd October, before returning to compete in the APRC again.

### The number of the Rally Hokkaido: 18

It doesn't get any better than this: the schedule for the Rally Hokkaido contained 18 stages over 220 kilometres, and a ŠKODA FABIA R5 was fastest on 18 occasions. The victorious Gaurav Gill recorded the fastest time on twelve stages and his team-mate Fabian Kreim was quickest on six occasions.

### 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	06.08.–07.08.2016
<b>Rally Hokkaido – Japan</b>	<b>23.09.–25.09.2016</b>
Rally Malaysia – Malaysia	29.10.–30.10.2016
Rally India – India	10.12.–11.12.2016



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#### ŠKODA at the APRC rally in Japan

Indian ŠKODA driver Gaurav Gill celebrated his fourth win in the APRC standings, in the fourth race of the season. On this occasion, Belgium's Stéphane Prévot guided him to victory.

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



#### ŠKODA at the APRC rally in Japan

The second ŠKODA MRF duo of Fabian Kreim/Frank Christian (D/D) reached the APRC podium for the fourth time this season.

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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 since 1991. The Volkswagen Group is one of the most successful automotive groups 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.