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RAJ & AJIT PUT IN A GOOD PERFORMANCE AT THE ASIAN BMW FORMULA SERIES - JAPAN

New Delhi, Wednesday, October 01, 2003:

This was the best result for **19-year-old Rajvirdhan**, son of veteran racer Vijayakumar of Coimbatore. Raj who qualified 7th and 4th in the two qualifying sessions, put in a very good effort to finish 5th in the first race of the 4.6km long Autopolis circuit in Japan. This was probably the toughest and most demanding circuit one has seen in most countries. For the first time in the entire championship, Raj was on the same pace as the top contenders and the difference between the top ten cars on the grid was less than seven tenths of a second.

In the first qualifying session Raj qualified with a time of 1 minute and 55.823 secs and in the 2nd qualifying Raj qualified with a time of 1 minute and 55.526 secs.

Race 1 was action packed, as there was a big pile up at the back of the grid going into corner 1. As Japanese driver Kobiyashi missed the braking point and smashed straight into the gearbox of **Ajit Kumar's** car putting him out of the race. Ajit walked away from the crash unhurt and it was a struggle from there on to get his car ready in time for the next race. The race was then restarted and Raj got off to a good start from 7th place on the grid to drive an excellent race to make up two places and finish a very creditable 5th.

Race 2 went off without any incident and Ajit's car was fixed just in time for him to make the grid. Going into the race, Ajit knew that the car was not going to be handling well, as there was no time to align and balance his suspension. Ajit drove a steady and controlled race to finish 12th.

Raj made a good start to stay on the tail of 2nd place driver Kieko Ihara and while trying to make a move went off the track into turn 1 and in the process lost more than seven places. The pace was so close that in spite of recovering Raj had no chance to regain any places and had to settle for a disappointing 11th place.

Ajit Kumar had a bad weekend as he was on painkillers recovering from an emergency piles operation he had to go through two days before he left for Japan. Finding it extremely difficult to even sit in the car, Ajit put in a great effort to qualify and finish the race. It was more for the participation and experience that the cine actor went ahead and bore the pain rather than pull out.

Championship leader Ho Pin was a cut above the rest and took both wins to seal the Championship with two races left in Beijing - China on the 26th of October 2003.