



Hero MotoSports Team Rally riders arrive in Chilecito in good shape after cancellation of stage nine

Chilecito, Argentina January 11: If it's not the rain and thundershowers, then it's the after effects that played havoc with this edition of the Dakar today. A massive landslide on the liaison of the eighth stage that forced the assistance crews and participants to take a 330-km detour to reach the bivouac in Salta hours behind schedule led the Dakar organisers to cancel the showpiece ninth stage called "Super Belen" from Salta to Chilecito. The landslide wiping out a substantial portion of the village of Volcan, which was on the route of today's stage, also played a decisive role in the cancellation of the stage on humanitarian ground.



Both Hero MotoSports Team Rally riders, Joaquim Rodrigues and C.S. Santosh reached the Salta bivouac late into the night after spending more than 15 hours on the road. However, on the troublesome day there was much to cheer for in the team's camp.

Rodrigues, who is making his debut Dakar appearance for the youngest team in the paddock, finished the eighth stage in an impressive 16th place. But even more impressive was his overall position in the provisional general classification. After the eighth stage, he broke into the top 10, and is currently placed in 10th place on the leaderboard.

“The first part of the eighth stage was really tough because there was a lot of fog and water on the tracks. So, had some problems to see the track. With all that fog, mud and water it was quite complicated to ride. I was doing pretty good through all this, but at the end of the stage I had a small crash, nothing major and the bike is fine. Still I managed to get another good result for the day. The second part of the stage was really fast. Overall, I am very happy with my result and for my team. The guys at Hero Motosports Team Rally have done a tremendous job,” said Rodrigues late in the night.

Santosh, too endured a tough day with the fog playing havoc with vision. He still managed to complete the day’s stage in 47th place that put him in overall 63rd position in the provisional general classification. *“I had to stop a few times in the first part of the stage to clean my goggles. Then for some distance I took them off, but a lot of mud got into my eyes, making it very difficult to ride. It got better when I got to the dunes. But I think that I lost some time up to CP1. In the second part of the stage, which was very fast, I made up some of the lost time. I am happy to make it to the bivouac on a day when many participants are forced to spend the night on the road,”* said Santosh.

The participants arrived in the Chilecito bivouac after a 675-km liaison from Salta for regrouping. The rally will commence with the 10th stage from Chilecito to San Juan with a special stage of 449-km i.e. if it’s run for the full distance.

Provisional Overall General Classification*

1. Sam Sunderland, Red Bull KTM Factory Team, KTM, 22:01:08
2. Pablo Quintanilla, Husqvarna Factory Team, Husqvarna, 22:22:06
3. Adrien Van Beveren, Yamaha Official Rally Team, Yamaha, 22:29:57
- 10. Joaquim Rodrigues, Hero Motosports Team Rally, Hero Speedbrain, 23:37:08**
- 63. C.S. Santosh, Hero Motosports Team Rally, Hero Speedbrain, 29:13:12**

*Note: Stage 9 was cancelled.

For more information, please visit:

www.heromotosports.com

FB: /HeroMotoSports

Twitter: @Hero_MotoSports

Press contact Hero MotoSports Team Rally

e-Mail: motosports@heromotosports.com

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