



■ The cross-country rally will be held from October 6-14. HT PHOTO

Raid de Himalaya to have new route

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NEWDELHI: The Raid de Himalaya will have a new route and will be without a title sponsor for the 20th edition of the country's premier cross-country rally, to be held from October 6-14. The off-road motorsports rally will start and end in Leh and will not hold any of its stages in Himachal Pradesh, as has been the tradition. Organisers said the decision was taken much before the torrential rain which resulted in floods in the hill state earlier this week.

"Our route this year starts and ends in Leh. This year's route was never designed for Himachal. All our stages are between Leh and Kargil districts. We will be approaching Leh through Srinagar where the effect of the storm was much less," Himalayan Motorsport Association (HMA) president Vijay Parmar said over the phone from Shimla.

The iconic rally will not have any title sponsor after HMA and Maruti Suzuki ended their almost 20-year association.

"We don't have sponsorship for this year. For the last so many years, they (Maruti) have constantly been pressurising us to adjust results and finally we said we cannot. This year HMA is sponsoring its own Raid de Hima-

laya. We have had to go as far as to decline Maruti an entry into the event though they wanted to," said Parmar.

"We informed them initially that they should sign up. However, September 15 was the last day and there was no word from them that they want to come and suddenly on September 16 there was a barrage of phone calls asking 'why haven't you entered our team'. I said because you haven't applied. Rules are rules."

Maruti Suzuki were the title sponsors of the Raid since 2001 and for the first time they won't have a team in the rally. "They have been solidly behind us for 17 years," added Parmar.

GILL'S ARJUNA MISS

NEWDELHI: Gaurav Gill missed out on the Arjuna award for the third time but he came very close to becoming India's first motorsport personality to receive the honour, revealed a selection committee member.

"If 2018 was not a year of Commonwealth Games and Asian Games, Gill would have got the award. The committee unanimously felt he deserved the honour but missed only because the number of Arjuna could not exceed 20, which was already over the usual limit," a committee member told PTI on Friday.