

2010 Syrian International Rally FIA Middle East Rally Championship, round 6 of 8

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**Qatar's Misfer Al-Marri set to defend 10-points MERC lead
MTN becomes official sponsor of 10th Syrian International Rally
Ahmad Hamsho leads three-car Syrian rally challenge.**

Officials at the Syrian Automobile Club in Damascus have confirmed that four of the front-runners in the 2010 FIA Middle East Rally Championship have already entered the sixth round of the series, which takes place in Syria on October 7th-9th, 2010.

Qatar's Misfer Al-Marri heads to Damascus with a 10-point lead in the prestigious eight-round championship, but the UAE's Sheikh Khalid Al-Qassimi catapulted himself into contention for a second title in seven years by taking maximum points in last weekend's Rally of Lebanon.

Defending champion Nasser

Saleh Al-Attiyah was forced to miss the Lebanese round of the series because of cross-country rallying commitments with Volkswagen in Russia, but the Qatari re-enters the fray in Syria and will need to reduce a 14-point deficit in the Drivers' Championship standings if he is to win the regional title for a seventh time in eight seasons. Two events in Cyprus and Dubai will wrap up this year's series in November and December in what looks set to be one of the closest championship finishes for years.

Hani Shaban, clerk of the course of the 10th Syrian International Rally, also confirmed that MTN



has agreed to become an official sponsor for the three-day event, which runs with the full support of the Ministry of Tourism. MTN is a leading GSM telecommunications company in the region and offers invaluable support to the Discover Syria Rally and now the country's round of the FIA rally series.

Shaban also announced that SMI, the Sheraton Ma'arat Sednaya, Jupiter Rent-a-Car, Zaman Alkhair, Aldunia television and Al-Madina radio are offering product and media support to the event.

Event officials are hopeful that all the registered championship contenders will tackle the all-desert route, which features new, technical special stages. Three Syrian drivers currently feature on the entry list, with Ahmad Hamsho and Haitham Yousefi leading the local challenge.

The event is based at Sednaya, north of Damascus, for a sixth time and will start in the capital on Thursday, October 7th, with two legs of special stages taking place on Friday, October 8th and Saturday, October 9th.