The JK Racing Asia Series is off to a flying start after the introduction of the 2011 Driver lineup ahead of the Season Opener this weekend in support of the 2011 Petronas Malaysian Grand Prix. The JK Racing Asia Series (formerly known as Formula BMW Pacific) will kick off with two rounds of racing this 9th and 10th April 2011.

Drivers and teams participating in the series were introduced to the media along with the surprise guest of the day, Formula 1 Team Lotus Test Driver and JK Tyre & Industries Ambassador, Karun Chandhok. Chandhok will be the mentor for the participants for the season as part of the added initiative from JK Tyre & Industries and Motorsport Asia.

“For the past 16 years, Motorsport Asia has successfully run the leading junior Formula Series’ in Asia, providing the necessary step forward for young drivers to emerge from karting to the next level in racing. In 2003, a new junior formula was introduced with the support of BMW and the Asian Series was run successfully by Motorsport Asia” said David Sonenscher, CEO of Motorsport Asia.

“With the support of JK Tyre & Industries, that series has now become the JK Racing Asia Series, a platform for developing young talents and progress their journey on the world motorsport stage” he continued.

As a driver that knows the importance of strong backing from a strong junior formula, Chandhok was instrumental in the initial development of the JK Racing Asia Series. His role as a mentor further acknowledges his belief that the drivers will be able to take away valuable lessons from the JK Racing Asia Series.

Karun Chandhok says, “I am very happy to be a part of the JK Tyre group as they continue to promote motorsports in the country. My dad and I, along with David Sonenscher and Sanjay Sharma were in touch on a daily basis to make this happen and we have no doubt that this will be a big success”.

The JK Racing Asia Series is currently the only Junior Formula that provides a unique opportunity where the drivers are given a platform to compete in front of the Formula 1 fraternity. The Series also showcases a line-up of drivers from all corners of the world, including Asia-Pacific and Europe.

The Series features some the most successful and established Teams in the Region, such as reigning team Champions Eurasia Motorsport, E-Rain Racing, EuroInternational, Meritus GP, Petronas Mofaz Racing and Atlantic Racing Team, all fighting for the first JK Racing Asia

Series Team Champion title.

Malaysia, as a host country for the Season Opener will have several young Malaysian drivers to support with seven of them being introduced at the event today, including the youngest participant for the Season, Malaysia's own Akash Neil Nandy from Meritus GP.

India is also fast becoming a strong force in motorsport and Sanjay Sharma, Head Motorsports, JK Tyre & Industries issued a statement on the event and the season opener this weekend: "At JK Tyre, we have always believed in nurturing and promoting young aspiring motorsport talents from India. Through our annual karting and racing championships, which have been running successfully for more than two decades now, we have churned out India's best drivers like Narain Karthikeyan, Karun Chandhok, Armaan Ebrahim, Aditya Patel who have made India proud at the international level.

"The JK Racing Asia Series is undoubtedly the most popular stepping stone for young motorsport enthusiasts in the Asia Pacific region. It is a matter of great pride for us as our prodigy - 16 yr old Raj Bharath who is a part of Team Meritus becomes the first Indian to race in the re-christened series" concluded Sharma.

JK Racing Asia Series consists of 18 races on six weekends in the 2011 season. On three occasions the JK Racing Asia Series will support Formula One Grand Prix, in Malaysia, Singapore and the newly built circuit in India. Two weekends will be held during the Asian Festival of Speed (AFOS) in Malaysia and Indonesia, with one weekend held in Guangdong during the Hong Kong Autosport Challenge (HKAC).

A dedicated 1-hour TV programme from each event, will bring the JK Racing Asia Series into 700 million households in over 100 countries.