

Team Mitsubishi Ralliart Wins Asia Cross Country Rally 2026 for Second Consecutive Year

- Katsuhiko Taguchi and Takahiro Yasui Become First Japanese Driver-Co-driver Pair to Claim Overall Victory

Tokyo, August 17, 2026 - Mitsubishi Motors Corporation (hereafter, Mitsubishi Motors) announced that Team Mitsubishi Ralliart, which receives technical support from the company, won the overall victory at the Asia Cross Country Rally (AXCR) 2026, held in Thailand from August 9 to 15, competing with three Triton¹ pickup trucks (T1 specification, or modified cross-country vehicle). The victory marks Team Mitsubishi Ralliart's second consecutive AXCR overall win and the first overall AXCR victory by a Japanese driver and co-driver pairing.

The rally covered a total distance of 2,145.19 kilometers (km), including 921.80 km of Special Stages (SS)², with Katsuhiko Taguchi taking overall victory in a total time of 12 hours 58 minutes 20 seconds. Kazuto Koide finished 27th, while Chayapon Yotha completed the rally in 36th place overall.



Triton Rally Car #106 (Taguchi, Yasui)



Team Mitsubishi Ralliart

Now in its 31st edition, the AXCR is a historic cross-country rally that traverses Southeast Asia, with Thailand serving as its primary stage. In recent years, the event has been held exclusively in Thailand, where dense jungles, plantations with repetitive scenery that can easily lead competitors off course, sections strewn with large rocks, river crossings where the driving line is difficult to judge, and deep, slippery mud ruts, combined with hot and humid conditions, place enormous demands on drivers, team members and their vehicles. Team Mitsubishi Ralliart secured a hard-fought overall victory against strong rivals in a rally where success demands driving skill, navigational expertise and strong teamwork, yet luck can still influence the competition.

The 2026 AXCR began with a ceremonial start on Walking Street in Pattaya, the beach resort city on Thailand's eastern coast, before the first SS began on August 10. Leg 1 headed north from Pattaya to Prachin Buri through eucalyptus and rubber plantations, where heavy rain left water-filled sections that resembled rivers, posing one of the many challenges characteristic of the

AXCR.

Leg 2 moved west from Prachin Buri to Nakhon Sawan. The SS distance was significantly shortened from 145.67 km to 67.32 km after military exercises were scheduled at a training ground on the route. Even so, the stage remained challenging, featuring difficult uphill rocky sections. Leg 3 featured a loop route from Nakhon Sawan through plantation areas in northern Thailand before returning to the city. Rice fields and irrigation canals dominated the landscape, while numerous similar-looking farm roads and waterways tested competitors' navigational skills.

Leg 4 continued north from Nakhon Sawan to Kamphaeng Phet. The route passed through forests and rural communities before entering farm roads that wound through cassava and sugarcane fields, including several high-speed sections. Leg 5 then took competitors to Phitsanulok in northern Thailand, an area known for its expansive natural scenery. The first half of the stage consisted of narrow and twisting forest roads around a reservoir, while the latter half featured long stretches of flat dirt roads running alongside waterways.

With only 58.62 km of SS scheduled for Leg 6, the rally's final day, Leg 5 effectively became the last major test in the fight for overall victory. The final stage was based in Phitsanulok and traversed mountainous terrain before returning to the city for the finish. Held at a higher elevation than the other stages, the route featured numerous holes and ruts that could cause a rollover even over a short distance, making it a stage where drivers could not afford to let their guard down until the very end.

Team Mitsubishi Ralliart Performance Highlights

Taguchi made a strong start in Leg 1, minimizing time losses on a day when many of the early-starting competitors went off course. Making full use of the Triton's outstanding cross-country performance through rivers and large pools of water left by heavy rain, he finished the opening leg in third place overall. He then set the fastest SS time in Leg 3 to move into the overall lead. Although his advantage over second place stood at just eight seconds, Taguchi and Yasui steadily extended their lead with a disciplined approach in conditions where a single mistake could have resulted in a significant loss of position.

By the end of Leg 5, the longest stage of the rally, the pair had built a lead of more than five minutes. On the final day, they adopted a measured approach, avoiding unnecessary risks and safely reaching the finish. Carefully managing the gap to their rivals, the pair claimed their first AXCR overall victory by 2 minutes 25 seconds and sealed a second consecutive AXCR title for Team Mitsubishi Ralliart.

Mitsubishi Motors employee driver Kazuto Koide, competing in his third AXCR,

got off to a difficult start when he became stuck in a roadside ditch during Leg 1, resulting in a timeout penalty. He recovered strongly over the remaining stages, supporting both Taguchi and Yotha while steadily improving his pace. Koide recorded the eighth-fastest stage time in SS5 and completed all special stages to finish 27th overall.

Defending champion Chayapon Yotha suffered a puncture in the rock section of Leg 2, losing valuable time while changing a tire. Determined to recover, he climbed back to sixth overall in Leg 3, but another setback followed in the latter half of Leg 4 when he struck the right rear of the car and was forced to make a second tire change. Engine trouble then developed in the first half of Leg 5. Despite these difficulties and the penalties incurred, Yotha reached the finish and was classified 36th overall.

Comments from Team Mitsubishi Ralliart

Hiroshi Masuoka, Team Director

"I am extremely proud that a Japanese driver and co-driver pair has won this rally for the first time in the event's history. As a fellow Japanese, I could not be more proud of this achievement. This year's rally was a closely fought battle from the very beginning, and it was impossible to predict who would come out on top. I believe this victory was achieved because every member of the team fully committed to teamwork. Mitsubishi Motors has long used the experience gained in motorsports under extreme conditions to support the development of production vehicles. The benefits go beyond driving performance and contribute to the confidence and safety that characterize Mitsubishi Motors vehicles. The same applies to the development of our engineers, whose experiences in this environment will undoubtedly contribute to their everyday work. I'd like to thank everyone for supporting us."

Katsuhiko Taguchi, Driver of Car #106

"I never imagined we would take the overall lead by the third day. It may have looked as though everything was going smoothly from the outside, but Yasui and I were driving at the limit throughout the rally. Once we moved into the lead, our rivals were forced to take greater risks in their pursuit, which worked in our favor. The AXCR offers a unique combination of difficulty and excitement because drivers must constantly make split-second decisions on unpaved roads. Thanks to the significant improvements made to the Triton's handling performance before the event, I was able to follow my intended line and avoid punctures. I am delighted to have won, although I still regret being overtaken during the final SS. Next time, I want to make sure we are the fastest on the road all the way to the finish."

Kazuto Koide, Driver of Car #118

"After a timeout penalty on the first day, I was close to losing heart, but a top-10 result in SS5 helped restore my confidence. This year's Triton was easier to control on stop-and-go sections thanks to improvements in low-rpm torque and shift control, while also demonstrating excellent performance on high-speed stages. The lessons

learned from this demanding rally, including decision-making and risk management at the limit, will prove invaluable in my work as an instructor and in training future test drivers. Providing safe, reassuring, and comfortable mobility for everyone, wherever their journey takes them - this is the essence of Mitsubishi Motors. Experiences like this, gained in some of the toughest conditions imaginable, contribute to building reliable vehicles that meet our customers' needs."

Chayapon Yotha, Driver of Car #101

"This year's rally was exceptionally demanding. The combination of mud, ultra-high-speed sections and jungles with limited visibility created conditions where there was no room for even the slightest mistake. I am disappointed that I was unable to maintain the pace I wanted because of mechanical issues. At the same time, I am proud that my teammate Taguchi successfully defended the championship for Team Mitsubishi Ralliart. The evolved Triton is an outstanding vehicle. Its excellent weight balance and visibility made it easy to control exactly as intended, to the point where it is difficult to find any real weaknesses. This rally once again reminded me of the strength and capability that have made Mitsubishi Motors a brand I have admired since childhood."

AXCR 2026 Auto Category – Overall Standings

1.	Katsuhiko Taguchi, Takahiro Yasui (Mitsubishi Triton)	12 h 58 m 20 s
27.	Kazuto Koide, Eiji Chiba (Mitsubishi Triton)	20 h 58 m 30 s
36.	Chayapon Yotha, Peerapon Sombatwong (Mitsubishi Triton)	34 h 48 m 43 s

AXCR 2026 Official Website:

<https://asiacrosscountryrally.com/index.html>

Ralliart Official Social Media

X (Japanese only):

https://x.com/ralliart_jp

Instagram:

<https://www.instagram.com/ralliart.official/>

AXCR Special Website:

<https://www.mitsubishi-motors.com/en/brand/ralliart/axcr/axcr2026/>

1. Sold as L200 in some markets
2. Actual distance was shortened due to course changes.

###

About Mitsubishi Motors

Mitsubishi Motors Corporation (TSE:7211) - a member of the Alliance with Renault and Nissan - is a global automobile manufacturer based in Tokyo, Japan, with

approximately 28,000 employees worldwide and production operations across Japan and the ASEAN region. Mitsubishi Motors has a strong heritage in all-wheel control technologies cultivated through rally activities, as well as decades of experience in electrified vehicle development. Leveraging these strengths, the automaker offers a diverse product lineup engineered to deliver superior performance across a wide range of road conditions and driving environments - including the Outlander PHEV, the Triton pickup truck, and the Delica Mini kei-car - reflecting Mitsubishi Motors' vision to awaken the spirit of adventure and deliver fulfilling mobility lifestyles. By further enhancing its signature technologies, Mitsubishi Motors continues its pursuit of creating distinctive products that embody Mitsubishi Motors-ness. With this commitment to vehicle manufacturing, Mitsubishi Motors will continue to deliver mobility experiences that bring excitement and inspiration to everyday life. For more information on Mitsubishi Motors, please visit the company's website at <https://www.mitsubishi-motors.com/en/>
<https://www.mitsubishi-motors.com/en/company/information/index.html>