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Press Release

For Immediate Publication

Muniyappa and Atwal Upbeat Ahead of Avantha Masters

New Delhi, February 7: India's Chinnsamy Muniyappa and compatriot Arjun Atwal are all geared up for a title assault on home soil at the inaugural €1.5 million (approximately US\$2.1 million) Avantha Masters beginning February 11.

Muniyappa, last year's Hero Honda Indian Open champion and Atwal, a former Asian Tour number one, will be part of the strong Indian challenge alongside two-time Asian number one Jeev Milkha Singh and Jyoti Randhawa at the DLF Golf and Country Club.

Last year's Asian Tour Order of Merit runner-up Liang Wen-chong of China, Thailand's Thaworn Wiratchant, who is an 11-time winner, and Darren Beck of Australia, the 2009 Brunei Open champion, will be among the plethora of top names at the tri-sanctioned event between the Asian Tour, European Tour and Professional Golf Tour of India (PGTI).

The European Tour will bring in more big names including David Howell, who scalped Tiger Woods at the HSBC Champions in 2006 season. Also in the field will be leading names like Darren Clarke, Gregory Havret, Mark Brown, Richard Finch and Anthony Kang.

All eyes will also be on India's rising stars Shiv Kapur, who won the Asian Tour Rookie of the Year award in 2005, Gaganjeet Bhullar, the 2009 Indonesia President Invitational champion and the duo Anirban Lahiri and Himmat Rai, who will be hunting for his maiden Asian Tour victory.

Muniyappa, who made headlines by winning the Hero Honda Indian Open at DLF last year, will be keen to repeat his feat where he stunned the field for his maiden Asian Tour victory.

Muniyappa, who grew up from humble beginnings and earned one rupee a day as a forecaddie during his youth, is looking forward to returning to the venue which launched him to fame. "It'll be nice to get back to DLF as I won there last year. I'm looking forward to it," he said.

"I played a couple of big events last year and even though I missed the cut in China (HSBC Champions) and Singapore (Barclays Singapore Open), I feel that I'm getting better because I'm seeing and playing with bigger players and that has given me more confidence playing on the Asian Tour," said Muniyappa.

The US-based Atwal, who won the Order of Merit in 2003, is hoping to display the kind of form which helped him to seven Asian Tour titles. His last victory was achieved at the 2008 Maybank Malaysian Open.

While he yearns to return to the winners' circle, he is also aware of the challenges that lie ahead. "With the way the Asian Tour has grown in the last few years, the prize money has increased and more tournaments are being played, it's only a matter of time before more guys break through and win big tournaments (internationally)," said Atwal.

Marcus Both of Australia, who claimed his second Asian Tour title at the 2009 Johnnie Walker Cambodian Open en route to his best season where he finished seventh on the Order of Merit, will also be in the elite field.

He will be banking on his commendable tied third place finish at last year's Indian Open where he missed the play-off by two strokes at DLF.



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