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Intermediate Student’s Book

Life

Fast lane to the future

By Don Belt

In Bangalore, Meena Shekaran, a 23-year-old accountant for a company that imports exercise equipment, has just purchased a scooter. She’s about to go for her first drive on a newly finished section of the superhighway. ‘Do you have a driving licence?’ I ask her. ‘No, sir, no,’ she giggles. ‘Do you know how to drive?’ ‘No, sir, not really,’ she shouts back cheerfully. ‘Don’t worry, I’ll be fine!’

Near Chennai, Tamil Selvan’s family are coconut farmers. Farming is hard work and badly paid. As a child, Tamil rode to school several miles away on his father’s bicycle. Now the 29-year-old works as a senior technician at the giant Hyundai car factory. Today most of the cars are exported, but with luck, Selvan might soon own one of the cars he makes. Auto industry experts predict that India will be the world’s third largest car market in the next quarter of a century.

In West Bengal, there are rumours in the press that some farmers may have to give up their land for the construction of the superhighway. Their future could be very difficult. ‘I’m sick with worry. What will we eat? How will we live? What is the future of our children?’ asks Kashinath Manna, who currently grows food for his entire extended family on his plot of land.

In Mumbai, Swede Morten Andersen is a manager at a Nokia factory which employs 9,000 people. He says India is ‘full of entrepreneurs. People here are creative, driven, full of energy and new ideas. The new superhighway is an example of this. The road will certainly bring lots of jobs and help many people. That’s the nature of progress.’

driven (adj) /ˈdrɪvən/ focused, determined

entrepreneur /ˌɒntrəprəˈnɜː/ someone who starts new companies

giggle (v)(n) /ˈɡɪɡl/ a way of laughing

plot (n) /plɒt/ a small piece of farmland

scooter (n) /ˈskuːtə/ a type of vehicle

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