

The-last-rajah-ratan-tata

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Modesty The chairman of the Tata Group " India's biggest conglomerate, with businesses ranging from software, cars, and steel to phone service, tea bags, and wristwatches " usually drives himself to the office in his \$12,500 Tata Indigo Marina wagon. He prefers to spend weekends in solitude with his two dogs at a beachfront home he designed himself. And disdainful of pretense, he travels alone even on long business trips, eschewing the retinues of oldies who typically coddle corporate chiefs.

But the 69-year-old Tata also has a daredevil streak. An avid aviator, he often flies a corporate Falcon 2000 jet around India. And in February he caused a sensation at the Aero India 2007 airshow by co-piloting Lockheed (LMT) F-16 and Boeing (BA) F-18 fighter jets. Tata's business dealings reflect the bolder side of his personality. In the past four years he has embarked on an investment binge that is building his group from a once-stodgy regional player into a global heavy-weight.

Since 2003, Tata has bought the truck unit of South Korea's Daewoo Motors, a stake in one of Indonesia's biggest coal mines, and steel mills in Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. It has taken over a slew of top hotels including New York's Pierre, the Ritz-Carlton in Boston, and San Francisco's Camden Place. The 2004 purchase of Tyco International's (TYC) undersea telecom cables for \$130 million, a price that in hindsight looks like a steal, turned Tata into the world's biggest carrier of international phone calls.

With its \$91 million buyout of British engineering firm Incat International, Tata Technologies now is a major supplier of outsourced industrial design for American auto and aerospace companies, with 3,300 engineers in India, the

U. S. , and Europe. The rowning deal to date has been Tata Steel's \$13 billion takeover in April of Dutch Britishsteel giant Corus Group, a target that would have been unthinkable Just d few years ago. In oneswoop, the move greatly expends Teta Steel's range of finished products, secures access toautomakers across the u. , and Europe, and boosts Its capacity fivefold, with mills added Inpennsylvania and OhloNow, a new gambit may catapult Tata into the big leagues ot global auto manufacturing: Thecompany is said to be weighing a bid for Jaguar Cars and Land Rover, which Ford Motor Co. (F)wants to el