

Ford names Tata as favourite in Jaguar, Land Rover sale

US carmaker Ford Motor Co confirmed for the first time Thursday that leading Indian automaker Tata Motors Ltd is the frontrunner to acquire the British motor brands Jaguar and Land Rover.

'Ford is committed to focused negotiations at a more detailed level with Tata Motors concerning the potential sale of the combined Jaguar and Land Rover business,' said Lewis Booth, executive vice-president of Ford's European units, in a statement.

Tata Motors has confirmed in [Mumbai](#) that it has had positive discussions with Ford regarding the possible purchase of the Jaguar and Land Rover businesses.

'We have said for some time that we are interested in it,' an official spokesman for TATA Motors told IANS.

'We hope both parties can reach an agreement in the forthcoming weeks, though these are complex negotiations and there is still much work that needs to be done before that position is reached,' the spokesman added.

'There is still a considerable amount of work to do and, while no final decisions have been made at this time, Ford will proceed with further substantive discussions with Tata Motors over the forthcoming weeks,' said a company memo to workers at Ford's British plants signed by Geoff Polites, chief executive officer of Jaguar and Land Rover.

This is the first time Tata Motors has been named by Ford, whose official communications to the media so far have only confirmed three unnamed bidders, who are nevertheless known to be Indian carmaker Mahindra and Mahindra and an American buy-up specialist One Equity besides Tata Motors.

The confirmation that Ford is focusing on the Tata offer comes after months of speculation over the sell-off.

The US carmaker put the two British marques up for sale last year after posting the biggest loss in its 103-year history. The Tata offer, which has won the backing of the Ford UK workers' union Unite, is said to be around the \$2-billion mark.

Unite joint general secretary Tony Woodley said: 'We need further and more detailed meetings and discussions with Ford and Tata, which will focus on the job security of our members in the Jaguar, Land Rover and Ford plants in the UK.'

'There are also crucial issues around wages, terms and conditions and pensions to address before any final decision is considered,' Woodley added.

Tata is said to have assured Unite that it will keep all three of Jaguar and Land Rover's British units at Solihull and Castle Bromwich in the Midlands and Halewood on Merseyside.

The three plants employ around 16,000 workers.

Ford bought Jaguar in 1989 for \$2.5 billion and Land Rover in 2000 for \$2.73 billion.

Dipankar De Sarkar and Quaid Najmi (© IANS / India eNews)