

Ex-Nissan boss accused of misappropriating funds

Ghosn handed ‘most serious’ indictment yet

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STAFF WRITER

The Tokyo District Public Prosecutor's Office on Monday indicted former Nissan Motor Co. Chairman Carlos Ghosn for a fourth time, this charge for allegedly misappropriating the company's money for personal use — an accusation described by legal experts as the most serious brought against him so far.

With the latest charge, Ghosn is accused of expropriating a Nissan subsidiary's payments to Suhail Bahwan Automobiles, a Nissan distributor in Oman.

Prosecutors allege that some of the money, about ¥560 million, had been siphoned off by Ghosn and sent to Good Faith Investments (GFI), a Lebanese investment firm he effectively controlled, for his own personal use, such as for the purchase of a luxury yacht.

Ghosn's defense team submitted a request for bail later in the day.

He had already been arrested and indicted on charges related to underreporting his remuneration for years and making Nissan cover some of his personal investment losses in 2008. He denies any wrongdoing.

In a related development Monday, Nissan filed a criminal complaint against Ghosn over aggravated breach of trust.

The carmaker said in a statement it has determined that the payments in question “were in fact directed by Ghosn for his personal enrichment and were not necessary from a business standpoint.”

“Such misconduct is completely unacceptable, and Nissan is requesting appropriately strict penalties,” the statement read.

Stephen Givens, a Tokyo-based corporate lawyer, said the fourth charge is the most serious accusation prosecutors have made so far against the 65-year-old former auto titan.

After Ghosn was arrested in early April his wife, Carole, ramped up her worldwide media blitz defending him and criticizing Japan's legal system.

Kyodo News reported that prosecu-

tors believe some of the money sent to GFI was diverted to Beauty Yachts, Carole Ghosn's firm registered in the British Virgin Islands. She has not been charged with any wrongdoing.

Earlier this month Carole Ghosn left Japan for France soon after his fourth arrest. On Friday, Yasuyuki Takai, an attorney and former prosecutor, said such a move could jeopardize any bail request by Ghosn as he might conspire with his wife and destroy any evidence.

But Shin Ushijima, a Tokyo-based corporate lawyer, said the Tokyo District Court will likely grant bail for a second time. Ghosn's first trial, which was expected to take place some time this autumn, may be pushed back due to the latest charge, Ushijima added.

“The focus will be on whether the trial will be held by the end of the year,” Ushijima said.

Ghosn was rearrested while out on bail on April 4. He and his lawyers denounced his fourth arrest, blasting it as an “arbitrary” attempt to sabotage his planned April 11 news conference. He has been held since that day at the Tokyo Detention House, where he had been detained for 108 days until he won his release on bail March 6.

“Even though it was a separate case, it's unthinkable to rearrest someone who has been released on bail,” one of his lawyers, Junichiro Hironaka, told an April 4 news conference.

Ghosn joined Nissan in 1999 and is credited with saving the automaker from bankruptcy. He was initially arrested at Tokyo's Haneda airport last Nov. 19 after Nissan said an internal probe found that Ghosn and close associate Greg Kelly had engaged in financial misconduct. Kelly also denies any wrongdoing.

In a video filmed April 3, the day before his fourth arrest, Ghosn characterized his ousting from the automaker he led for 20 years as “a conspiracy” by “selfish” Nissan executives who were afraid to forge ahead in its alliance with Mitsubishi Motors Corp. and Renault SA.



Security personnel inspect the interior of St. Sebastian's Church in Negombo, Sri Lanka, on Monday, a day after the church was hit in a series of bomb blasts targeting religious sites and luxury hotels. AFP-JIJI

Sri Lanka seeks answers after attacks

COLOMBO/NEW DELHI
BLOOMBERG, REUTERS, AP, AFP-JIJI

Sri Lanka sought to restore stability Monday following one of Asia's deadliest terrorist attacks in years, detaining 24 suspects and asking the world for help in investigating possible involvement by international terrorist groups.

Authorities said 290 people were killed and more than 500 wounded by a string of bombings that tore through churches and luxury hotels on Easter Sunday.

The government announced a curfew in Colombo from 8 p.m. Monday until 4 a.m. A Sunday night curfew was lifted in the morning. Authorities also blocked platforms such as Facebook and Whatsapp.

The government believes a local Islamist extremist group called the National Thowtheeth Jama'ath was behind the deadly suicide bomb attacks, government spokesman Rajitha Senaratne said Monday. The strikes, which targeted foreign tourists and Christians, marked a shift from the violence that fueled a three-decade civil war on the Indian Ocean island. Senaratne, who is also a Cabinet minister, added that the government was investigating whether the group had “international support.”

Not much is known about the NTJ, a radical Muslim group that has been linked to the vandalizing of Buddhist statues.

A police source said that all 24 people in custody in connection with the attacks belong to an “extremist” group, but did not specify further.

Sri Lanka needs help from security officials abroad to “check foreign links of these groups,” Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said in an address to the nation late Sunday, without giving more details. “We have to look deeper into this, but the first task is to make sure that the country is not destabilized.”

Wickremesinghe suggested authorities had received warnings but “not enough attention had been paid.” One of his Cabinet ministers, Harin Fernando, tweeted an internal police memo dated April 11 warning that NTJ planned to bomb Catholic churches and the Indian High Commission.

The bombings were carried out by seven suicide bombers, a government investigator said Monday.

An analysis of the attackers' body parts made clear that they were suicide bombers, said Ariyananda Welianga, a forensic crime investigator. He said most attacks were carried out by a single bomber, with two at Colombo's Shangri-La Hotel.

A government source said President Maithripala Sirisena, who was abroad when the attacks happened, had called a meeting of the National Security Council early on Monday. Wickremesinghe would attend the meeting, the source said.

Sri Lankan military who were clearing the route from Colombo airport late on Sunday in preparation for Sirisena's return found a homemade bomb near the departure gate, an air force spokesman said. They disposed of the device in a controlled explosion, the spokesman said.

A sense of unease pervaded the nation Sunday following a period of relative calm in the decade since the end of a brutal conflict between the predominately Buddhist Sinhalese majority and mostly Hindu Tamil minority. So far no one has claimed responsibility for the attacks.

U.S. President Donald Trump and other world leaders condemned the attack and offered support.

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Ichiro: A virtuoso on the diamond

Retired outfielder's work ethic, clutch hits made him a legend

Heisei Icons

JASON COSKREY
STAFF WRITER

Seattle Mariners manager Lou Piniella had seen enough.

His new outfielder Ichiro Suzuki hadn't been putting up great numbers during the spring of 2001, at least not commensurate with the combined \$27 million it took to sign him out of Japan over the winter of 2000.

His signing had been met with skepticism, including from Piniella himself. There had been Japanese pitchers in Major League Baseball before, but never a position player, and this one didn't look the part to the baseball men. He was skinny and had an odd batting stance. In Japan, he'd used a funky, pendulum-like leg kick to tear up that league, but this was MLB.



On this particular day, in Peoria, Arizona, Ichiro was poking weakly hit balls to the left side of the field.

“He was hitting to left field a lot, and they were really shading him over, playing him almost like a right-handed pull hitter,” Piniella told Seattle Times columnist Larry Stone in July 2001. “I told him he needed to pull the ball, and he said, ‘No problem.’ The next at-bat, he hit one out of the park to right and

New York Yankees outfielder Ichiro Suzuki smiles after recording his 4,000th career hit at Yankee Stadium in August 2013. KYODO

said, ‘Are you happy now?’

“I told Ichiro, ‘You can do whatever you want the rest of the year.’”

Ichiro spent the rest of 2001 — after which he was crowned the American League's MVP and Rookie of the Year — similarly opening eyes across the baseball world.

He would become one of the most important players of the Heisei Era, which is slated to end at the end of this month, in Japan as well as in the United States. When he walked off the field for the final time on March 21 at Tokyo Dome, he drew the curtain on a career that began with doubts and ended all but certain of a spot in the Baseball Hall of Fame one day.

“I love baseball, that has never changed,” Ichiro said after his final game.

Ichiro played from 1992 to 2019, finishing with 3,089 hits for the Mariners, New York Yankees and Miami Marlins in MLB and 1,278 in Japan with the Orix BlueWave. His combined total of 4,367 is the most in history. When he passed former MLB great Pete Rose for that distinction with his 4,257th hit, in 2016, the feat was recognized

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