

French govt seeks new Renault boss, ditches Ghosn

January 16 2019, by Antonio Rodriguez, Clare Byrne



Carlos Ghosn has lost his positions at Nissan and Mitssubishi and now the French government wants him replaced as Renault CEO

The French government on Wednesday called for former Nissan chief Carlos Ghosn, who has spent the last two months in Japanese custody, to be replaced as chief executive of carmaker Renault.

Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire called for Renault's board to meet "in the coming days "to pick a "new lasting leadership" to replace the fallen auto titan, who has been charged with under-declaring his income and aggravated breach of trust.

The French state is Renault's biggest shareholder, owning a 15-percent stake.

Ghosn, who built up a formidable alliance between Renault, Nissan and Mitsubishi that sold more cars than Volkswagen in 2017, has already been stripped of his [leadership roles](#) at Nissan and Mitsubishi.

But until now the French government had refrained from trying to oust him from the country's second-biggest carmaker.

The move came a day after a Tokyo court denied bail for the 64-year-old Franco-Brazilian-Lebanese businessman, meaning he could remain in pre-trial detention for several more months.

Last week, Ghosn was hit with further charges for alleged financial misconduct—all of which he denies.

'Lasting leadership' sought

"I always indicated, while reiterating the presumption of Carlos Ghosn's innocence, that if he was durably prevented (from fulfilling his role) we would move to the next stage. We're there now," Le Maire told LCI broadcaster.

"In this new stage we need a new lasting leadership for Renault," he said, adding that he had "explicitly asked, as the shareholder of reference, that Renault's board of directors meet in the coming days" to choose a new CEO.

Several people have been cited as possible replacements for Ghosn.

Le Maire praised Michelin CEO Jean-Dominique Senard, tipped as a possible future chairman of the board, working alongside chief operating officer Thierry Bollore.

Ghosn made a dramatic courtroom appearance in Japan on Tuesday, during which he denounced the allegations against him, saying he had been "wrongly accused and unfairly detained".

He has been indicted on two counts of under-declaring his income in statements to shareholders, amounting to over nine billion yen (\$83 million) over eight fiscal years.

Ghosn also stands charged with "aggravated breach of trust" over a complex alleged scheme in which he is said to have tried to transfer foreign exchange losses to Nissan's books.

His ongoing detention has prompted some international criticism of Japan's legal system and created tensions between Renault and its Japanese partners.

In a letter to Human Rights Watch, his wife Carole Ghosn complained about the "harsh" conditions in which he was being held since his shock arrest at Tokyo's Haneda airport on November 19

She also claimed he was being subjected to round-the-clock interrogations intended to extract a confession.

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