

Police Raid Firm of Ecologist's Spouse

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The  Moscow Times

Police searched a company owned by the husband of environmental champion Yevgenia Chirikova, who dared defy the authorities over a highway project set to partially destroy Moscow region's Khimki forest.

Wednesday's raid on Mikhail Matveyev's Ezop engineering company was linked to a tax evasion investigation into another engineering firm in Nizhny Novgorod, Chirikova's supporters said on a LiveJournal blog.

Investigators are looking for evidence of possible ties between Ezop and the Nizhny Novgorod company, Energo Engineering, the report said. Matveyev was questioned but not detained.

Chirikova's supporters linked the search to their criticism of Transportation Minister Igor Levitin, who they claim will be a beneficiary of the \$8 billion project to build a highway from Moscow to St. Petersburg.

Environmental activists have started an online petition for Levitin's removal, gathering more than 3,300 signatures by Wednesday. They also picketed the ministry on Tuesday.

Levitin has not commented on the allegations.

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