

Ex-Minister Made to Pay Over 'Toxic Dust'

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Former Health and Social Development Minister Yury Shevchenko has paid about 20 million rubles (\$676,000) in compensation for "toxic dust" that settled in an apartment owned by Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill.

"I sold my apartment in St. Petersburg, and we paid the required sum on Thursday," said Shevchenko's son, Yury, the Rapsi new agency reported Friday.

"Father is very sick, and he might need treatment abroad. So we had to make the payment," he said.

Shevchenko, 65, who is fighting cancer, faced a ban on leaving the country for at least six months following a lawsuit filed by Lidia Leonova, who was living in the Kirill-owned apartment located under Shevchenko's in central Moscow.

According to the lawsuit, renovation works in Shevchenko's apartment stirred up a lot of toxic dust, which settled on a collection of valuable books owned by Kirill. The apartments are

located on Ulitsa Serafimovicha in an apartment building known as the House on the Embarkment, once a residence of the Soviet elite.

Moscow courts have ruled against Shevchenko, the country's top surgeon and a prominent cardiologist. He served as health and social development minister from 1999 to 2004 and was inducted as an Orthodox priest in 2009 under the name of Georgy.

Media reports said Shevchenko does not live in the Moscow apartment and had given it to his daughter, who wanted to do the renovation back in 2010.

The patriarch confirmed his ownership of the dusty apartment in a private conversation with journalist Vladimir Solovyov, but denied currently living there, saying it is inhabited by two of his cousins.

The lawsuit remains unsettled. Court hearings are to resume Tuesday, although the plaintiff is likely to call off her lawsuit now that restitution has been paid.

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