

Shoigu Inaugurated as Moscow Governor

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KRASNOGORSK, Moscow Region — Sergei Shoigu, during his inauguration as Moscow governor on Thursday, promised to promote investment and raise the region's \$10 billion budget.

The former emergency situations minister is replacing Boris Gromov, whose dozen-year tenure was marked by several corruption scandals, including the purported embezzlement of nearly \$1 billion by his top finance official, Alexei Kuznetsov — which brought the region to near-bankruptcy, prosecutors said. Kuznetsov fled the country and remains at large.

Analysts said that in order to win confidence, Shoigu must sack unpopular figures. Political expert Sergei Markov, who is vice president of the Plekhanov Russian University of Economics, mentioned Khimki Mayor Vladimir Strelchenko, a protege of outgoing Governor Gromov, as an example.

Strelchenko has been accused of corruption and repressing opponents of the construction of a Moscow-St. Petersburg highway that requires a sizable portion of Khimki forestland to be

chopped down.

Markov also named high crime as a major problem that Shoigu should tackle. "This scares investors," he said.

The inauguration was attended by many senior officials, including acting Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov, Federation Council head Valentina Matviyenko, acting Economic Minister Elvira Nabiullina and Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin.

Shuvalov told Shoigu that he could rely on his friends within the ruling elite. Shoigu had said previously that he would not bring many Emergency Situations Ministry officials to work for the regional government.

Shuvalov, likely to assume a senior post in Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev's new Cabinet, has indicated that the new governor should increase social standards in the region. "The social standards for those who live in Moscow [the city] and in the region are different," he said.

The charismatic, often laid-back Shoigu looked a bit tense during the ceremony. After the swearing-in, a Russian Orthodox priest presented him with a Kazan Mother of God icon. Shoigu crossed himself.

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