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Shoigu Sees Forests as Income Source

By The Moscow Times

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Governor Sergei Shoigu said money earned from selling off forest land would go on solving the Moscow region's social problems.

Moscow region Governor Sergei Shoigu said it doesn't make sense to turn "every tree" into a big political matter as was the case with the Khimki Forest, in an interview with Kommersant.

"I don't understand why it's forbidden to touch the forests. We have 2 million hectares in the Moscow region. In your view we should do nothing on that territory? Not build any roads, not set up any power lines?" Shoigu said.

The governor confirmed that as a result of the expansion of the city into the region's territory, his budget is losing 34 billion rubles ($1.06 billion) a year, which has to be replaced somehow.

"Ecologists are right when they say this is a recreation area. This means there should be plots for individual construction or for building recreational facilities, small hotels and tourism facilities. This would mean that only for those purposes could such territory be sold. And we will sell them, since we need to get money from somewhere to solve our social problems. We

don't have oil or gas," Shoigu said.

Yevgenia Chirikova, a candidate for mayor in the Moscow region town of Khimki and leader of the Protect Khimki Forest movement, is concerned by what the governor said.

"The situation with the statement by Shoigu has me scared. I understood that he is an adherent to the concept of using the resources of the region, which is not right. Construction is a flawed way of development," Chirikova said.

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