Beat: Miscellaneous

Thousands evacuated, 76 hurt in Moscow subway fire

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USPA News - Thousands of people were evacuated from the Moscow subway Wednesday and parts of the network were closed when a power cable caught fire during morning rush hour, emergency officials said. More than 70 people sought medical attention, including some who were hospitalized.

The fire broke out at around 8:30 a.m. local time in a tunnel near Okhotny Ryad station that is adjacent to Red Square, not far from the Kremlin that serves as the president`s official residence. It happened on the Sokolnicheskaya Line which crosses through the heart of Moscow and is the oldest line in the subway system. The smoke quickly filled nearby subway stations, forcing authorities to evacuate around 4,500 commuters and close six stations at the height of the morning rush hour. Russia`s Ministry of Emergency Situations said 76 people sought medical treatment, including 16 people who were hospitalized, while psychological assistance was provided to 28 people. The Sokolnicheskaya Line was initially re-opened at 12:05 p.m. local time, but train movement was halted again about 30 minutes later when a short circuit affected the line. Train service on the line was eventually restored at 2:10 p.m. local time, although a technical fault also briefly halted train traffic on the Serpukhovsko-Timiryazevskaya line. Maxim Liksutov, Deputy Mayor of Moscow and head of the city`s Department for Transport and Road Infrastructure Development, said the transport sector successfully worked together to deal with the emergency situation. He noted that 40 buses, trolley buses, and trams were quickly made available to transport evacuated commuters. "The whole of the Moscow transport sector worked together today to cope with the situation, to ensure the safety of passengers and provide alternative ways of transportation," Liksutov said. "We have set up a commission to investigate the causes of this incident. The Moscow City government will take the investigation under special supervision to prevent such incidents in the future." The Moscow Metro, the world`s third busiest rapid transit system, serves nearly 2.5 billion passengers a year.

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UPA United Press Agency LTD
483 Green Lanes
UK, London N13NV 4BS
contact (at) unitedpressagency.com
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