

THE NEWS

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UFOs may be real, admits Russia

MOSCOW (AAP): A Soviet newspaper said today Unidentified Flying Objects could exist.

It said a Soviet fighter plane had a brush with a mystery object two years ago.

The weekly *Sovietskaya Kultura* said there still were many unexplained phenomena behind various "flying saucer" reports and urged scientists to collect and collate as much information as possible on the subject.

Many senior Soviet scientists "do not deny that such phenomena could be connected with extra-terrestrial civilisation," the newspaper said, adding that among them was a corresponding member of the elite Academy of Science.

In an example of recent strange happenings in the Soviet Union itself, the report said a fighter plane encountered a "flery ball" five metres in diameter, in 1981.

Damage

The ball had travelled in front of the craft for some distance "as if measuring its speed" and had then passed through it, exploding as it reached the tail and causing structural damage.

Scientists had at first assumed the phenomenon was ball lightning, but the damage to the plane did not tally with this, and lightning would not be able to move in the same direction as the fighter, the newspaper said.

It also revealed that the Soviet Union was working on plans for a long-distance unmanned space mission in order to try to track down signs of civilisation on distant planets.

Black hole found

WASHINGTON (AAP): A team of astronomers has discovered what it believes is the largest stellar black hole yet detected, scientists said today.

The black hole is about 180,000 light years from the earth—a tiny distance in cosmic terms—and has a mass of between eight and 12 that of the sun.

It was discovered in the Large Magellanic Cloud, the nearest galaxy to the Milky Way, in which the earth is located, and has been christened LMC-X3.

Black holes are invisible concentrations of matter so compact and dense they swallow everything, even light, within their gravitational field.

Unlike normal black holes, which are thought to exist at the heart of galaxies, stellar black holes have companion stars which they orbit and suck gases from at extraordinarily high speed.