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'UFO' blip leaves airport officials foxed

21 Mar 2009, 0402 hrs IST, TNN

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KOLKATA: An unidentified flying object blipped on the city radar in the wee hours of Thursday, a little after mysterious objects were photograph-ed hovering in the London sky. The blip that lasted for 15 minutes on the Bay of Bengal left airport and IAF officials foxed. While some suspect an unscheduled aircraft strayed into Indian airspace, others termed it a UFO. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation has ordered an investigation.

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The unidentified aircraft or object was spotted on the airport radar at 3.45 am on Thursday. Sources said there was only a Cathay Pacific overflight scheduled for the time and in that direction. "But the flight showed a separate blip. What's more, we had communication problems with the Cathay Pacific pilot during the time the

mystery blip was on screen," said an air controller.

IAF clarified that it had no exercise scheduled over the Bay of Bengal at that hour, and that none of its aircraft in the region were airborne then. Though the blip may have been due to either a snag in the 11-year-old radar or the reflection of moonlight from a school of fish, what worries security agencies is the possibility of unauthorized aircraft entering Kolkata region. On December 17, 1995, a Latvia-registered AN-26 aircraft had entered India undetected and dropped arms in Purulia.

"If a foreign aircraft had ventured into Indian airspace, it is IAF's role to scramble and counter it," an AAI official said. The London sighting on Thursday has hyped interest in the Kolkata UFO. Given the 5.5-hour time zone difference between India and UK and the 11-hour flight time, science fiction buffs drew a link between London's 'flying saucers' and the mystery blip at the airport.

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