Japanese ice cores go back million years

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Scientists in Japan are studying ice core samples pulled from 2 miles deep in Antarctica and believed to be the oldest ever retrieved.

Hideaki Motoyama, the project's leader from the National Institute of Polar Research said the deepest sample will give scientists a snapshot of the Earth's climate about 1 million years ago, The Times of London reported from Tokyo.

It took two years of drilling to obtain the cores at the Dome Fuji base, in the eastern Antarctic, the report said.

Motoyama said while the environment in Antarctica is very harsh, he hopes scientists may find traces of microscopic life, along with the measurable concentrations of carbon dioxide and methane.

Fallen snow preserves dust, ash, bubbles of atmospheric gas and even radioactive elements; a better source of climatic information than tree rings or layers of sediment, the report said.