

Scientists' Exploits at Lake Receive Kudos From Putin

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Putin checking out water from an ice core drilled into Lake Vostok. **Alexei Nikolsky**

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin on Friday praised scientists who reached a lake in Antarctica that was hidden under more than 3 kilometers of ice and may hold life from the distant past.

On national television, the natural resources minister gave Putin a canister of water from melted ice at the bottom of the bore shaft near the surface of Lake Vostok.

Putin hailed the discovery of Lake Vostok as a "great event" and said the research team members will receive national awards.

Reaching the surface of Lake Vostok, the largest of nearly 400 subglacial lakes in Antarctica, was a major discovery avidly anticipated by scientists around the world.

The lake is expected to hold living organisms that have been locked in icy darkness for some 20 million years, as well as clues to the search for life elsewhere in the solar system.

Scientists believe microbial life exists in the dark depths of the lake despite its high pressure

and constant cold, conditions similar to those believed to be found under the ice crust on Mars, Jupiter's moon Europa and Saturn's moon Enceladus.

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