

Life existed 3,800m years ago!

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HOUSTON, Feb. 23: A hint that life may have existed on earth 3,800 million years ago has been discovered in ancient rocks collected during the past two years in Greenland. a noted bio-chemist reported recently, according to AP.

If the findings are confirmed by further analysis, Dr. Cyril Ponnamperna of the University of Maryland said it would push back by 400 million years the earliest known life on the planet.

The record is now held by 3,400 million year old fossils found in South Africa.

Ponnamperna and colleagues from three other institutions are examining carbonaceous material from rocks found near the edge of the Greenland ice sheet. He said these are the oldest known sediments on earth, Ponnamperna said.

Heat and pressure upon these sediments when they were buried changed the carbon into graphite.

He said preliminary isotopic studies suggest that the carbon was once part of an organism. But he said considerable more research is needed to confirm that, "this is not conclusive", he said, "it is merely a hint".

If life did exist that long ago, Ponnamperna said it must have evolved relatively quickly because earth is 4,600 million years old and he said it probably took half a billion years for oceans to form to create the right environment for living things.

The Greenland rocks were collected by an international consortium of scientists from Oxford University, Harvard University, the Max Planck Institute and the University of Maryland.