Australia: Oral health at stake in federal election
Health experts demand better access to public dental services

HONG KONG/LEIPZIG, Germany: Health experts in Australia have urged all political parties to make oral health a greater priority in the upcoming federal election. In a statement released by the National Oral Health Alliance, a non-governmental body comprised of several dental and health organisations, they also called for the development of a sustainable dental workforce to allow people better access to oral health-care services.

Currently, Australians who are in need of public dental health-care services have to wait for long periods before they receive treatment. In some parts of the country, patients have to wait between one to two years. As a consequence, figures suggest that one in three Australians decide to delay or avoid dental treatment altogether.

The incumbent Labor Party led by Prime Minister Julia Gillard claimed to have delivered more than 850,000 dental check-ups to teenagers under 16, produced a new universal dental scheme as promised in the 2007 federal election. Their US$3.57 billion scheme called DentiCare, developed by the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission, has been opposed by the Coalition members in the Senate in favour of Medicare, an existing dental care scheme for patients with chronic conditions introduced by opposition leader Tony Abbott in 2007, when he was Minister for Health and Ageing. Labour recently established a taskforce to investigate dentists’ compliance with the Medicare scheme, which they say found that a substantial number of them failed to comply with the requirements.

Abbot has announced that he will seek to retain Medicare in case of an electoral win. Australia will be able to vote for a new government on 21 August. Latest polls have predicted a tight between Labor and the Coalition of the Liberal Party and National Party.

Malpractice bill dismissed by Thai doctors

Medical and dental professionals in Thailand are opposing a new law that aims to give victims of malpractice more rights without having to go to court. In a public letter to Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva, doctors and dentists stated that the committee that developed the law did not consult them. The new law that aims to give victims more rights organisations, there are between 10,000 and 50,000 cases of malpractice every year in Thailand, of which only a small percentage ends up in court. Over 97 per cent of all registered complaints were filed against state hospitals last year, according to figures from the National Health Security Office in Bangkok.

FDI congress adds to Singapore title

Singapore has recently been claiming the position of best city and country to hold business meetings in Asia for the third consecutive year. In 2009, the city hosted over 600 meetings that met international criteria, including the Annual World Dental Congress of the FDI World Dental Federation.

Best teeth whitener is fruit, study say

A recent study by Harvard University in the United States has revealed that eating fruit daily is the best way to whiten teeth. Through a three-month clinical study, it was found that strawberries, orange peels, and lemon juice have a natural enzyme that removes tooth stains.

French and the US go digital fast

Dental markets in France and the US are worldwide leaders in the adoption of digital sensors, according to a US market report. While France has a high penetration rate of almost 75 per cent, US practices are undergoing a rapid transition from analogic film to digital technology, which will have a dramatic impact on the US dental imaging market, the report states.

Intraoral X-ray procedures are the most common type of dental X-ray nowadays as they are typically performed in annual checkups. Dental practitioners can choose between analogue film, photostimulable phosphor and digital systems.

Digital sensors are able to take and upload X-ray images of teeth to a computer immediately, which eliminates the labour necessary for the development of physical film. By reducing film loss, digital imaging also reduces the total number of X-rays taken and in turn decreases patient exposure to radiation.