India to get stand-alone dental insurance
New oral health care scheme expected to be launched in June

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NEW DELHI, India/HONG KONG/LEIPZIG, Germany: The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority in India has approved a stand-alone insurance scheme that could help millions of patients throughout the country gain access to much-needed dental care, Indian newspapers have reported. The scheme, which is said to be implemented in June, will cover basic dental procedures, such as check-ups, fillings and extractions, as well as treatment for oral cancer.

Proposed by the Indian Dental Association in 2003, the plan has been under review since then. It has been announced that the General Insurance Corporation, an insurance company owned by the government, and three other public insurance companies will form part of the scheme. Two insurance options will be offered for a premium of Rs 1,000 (US$22) and Rs 2,000 (US$44) per year.

Currently, most dental fees in India are paid out of pocket and insurance is mainly offered through general health insurance, which often stipulates certain requirements, such as hospitalisation. Stand-alone dental schemes exist, for example, through private companies like Unilever but they are not utilised by the masses.

Dr Ravi Sher Singh Toor, a senior lecturer in the Department of Pedodontics & Preventive Dentistry at Luxmi Bai Dental College & Hospital in Punjab, said that a good dental insurance scheme should include preventative services and give patients the freedom to choose their own dentist. They should also allow the option to refer the patient to a specialist, he added.

Bank report predicts new “Asian Century”

A new report released at the Annual Meeting of the Asian Development Bank in Vietnam has forecast that the region could account for half of the world’s economic output by 2050, provided that it sustains growth and overcomes challenges like urbanisation and social wellbeing.

Under these assumptions, more than 5 million people could enjoy living standards comparable with those enjoyed by most Western countries today. Prospects are high for countries like Vietnam, Thailand and Malaysia, according to the report.

Currently, the continent, led by high-income developed economics like China, Korea and Japan, accounts for 27% of the world’s economic output.

New hope for facial rehabilitation

An exercise programme involving devices used by dentists has shown prospects for the rehabilitation of facial nerve damage. The treatment uses an instrument associated with measuring tongue strength and the so-called Perry appliance to increase the strength of impaired facial muscle regions.

Unilever to expand China business

Owing to its growth in emerging markets, Unilever, the Anglo-Dutch manufacturer of toothpaste and other consumer products, has announced to expand its business in China with a new production site. The plant will be located in Tianjin and have an annual production output of 100,000 tons.

Geistlich takes over Korean distributor

The Swiss dental manufacturer Geistlich Pharma has announced that it has acquired 100% of the shares of Jungsan Biomed, its current distribution partner in South Korea. The new company will be based in the capital Seoul and focus exclusively on the distribution of Geistlich’s biomaterials for bone replacement and tissue regeneration in dental and cranio-facial surgery. Financial details were not disclosed.

According to a Geistlich representative, the Jungsan acquisition is one of the most recent steps in the company’s long-term strategy for international expansion. It is also intended to strengthen the market presence in one of the most dynamic and competitive dental markets in Asia. The company will retain the staff and facilities of Jungsan Biomed in Seoul, the representative said.

Geistlich Pharma is part of the larger Geistlich Group conglomerate, which includes activities in the production of adhesives, fat for animal feeds and real estate. Besides South Korea, the company also has a subsidiary in Beijing in China.