Ancient teeth question origin of men

HONG KONG/LEIPZIG, Germany: Humans may have been evolved from primates in Asia, fossils found in Myanmar suggest. The jawbones and teeth of a family of earlier and primitive primates did not evolve into monkeys or apes. Heavy dental abrasion also indicated that ancient teeth that distinguish the animal, also called Ganeia megacantina, from prosimians, a family of earlier and primitive primates that did not evolve into monkeys or apes. Heavy dental abrasion also indicated that Ganeia used its canine teeth to open tough tropical fruits and extract the nutritious seeds contained inside, a type of feeding adaptation that has never been documented among prosimian primates.

These findings show that early Asian anthropoids had already assumed the modern ecological role of modern monkeys 58 million years ago,’ Dr Bead said. Recent paleoanthropological research has been focusing on evidence that anthropoids originated from prosimians and some scientists also argued that primates such as Ganeia megacantina were not anthropoids at all.
Micronesia study confirms oral health benefits of xylitol

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Recently, the use of a xylitol syrup rinse was confirmed to be effective protection against tooth decay. Researchers, who conducted a study in the Republic of the Marshall Islands where the caries rate is two to three times that of the typical American or European community, found that 16 ml of xylitol syrup could prevent up to 70 per cent of decayed teeth. The findings were presented in the July issue of the Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, and demonstrate the first evidence (to the authors’ knowledge) that xylitol is “effective for the prevention of decay in primary teeth for toddlers.”

Scientists in Finland first discovered the beneficial uses of xylitol in dentistry in the early 1970s. Studies led by Profs. Kauko K. Mäkinen and Arje Schein at the Institute of Dentistry at the University of Turku proved that xylitol, which occurs as a sugar in the fibres of many fruits and vegetables, inhibits the adhesion of the caries-causing oral bacterium Streptococcus mutans.

Xylitol is widely used in a number of dental care products, including chewing gum, toothpaste and mouth rinses.

Beijing targets health

The government of Beijing has announced a ten-year plan for raising the average life span of its citizens through increasing health awareness and the improvement of health care services. Further objectives are to reduce obesity rates in primary and middle schools, as well as to lower mortality rates amongst pregnant women and babies, city officials told reporters at a press conference in August. Improved dental hygiene will also be a point of focus, they said.

Living conditions and lifestyles have changed rapidly in major Chinese cities like Beijing and Shanghai. An unhealthy diet rich in sugars, low exposure to fluoride in general and a lack of tradition in personal care and oral hygiene are major factors in increasing dental caries incidence rates. Growing tobacco consumption and excessive use of alcohol have also increased the risk of periodontal disease and oral cancer. Beijing has invested US$2 million in recent years on caries prevention programmes but needs to do more to improve oral health status amongst its citizens. According to the third national oral epidemiological survey in 2008, over 90 per cent of people in the city suffer from some form of oral disease.

Fang Laiying, director of the Beijing Municipal Health Bureau, said that the municipal government hopes to improve the health of locals comprehensively through the plan’s implementation. He said the incidence of chronic, non-infectious diseases has been on the rise in recent years, including high blood pressure, diabetes and coronary disease. The municipal government will work intensively to achieve the plan’s objectives, through popularising health information, such as correct toothbrushing, and advocating healthy food, tobacco control and more exercise. Efforts will also be made to further dental health care, eye care, personal health awareness, and safeguard the health of mothers and infants.

Laiying added that a committee for health promotion with personnel from 18 governmental departments had been set up by the municipal government to oversee the efforts of urban districts, suburban counties and relevant government departments in implementing the plan. The funds necessary for implementing the plan will be provided for in the city monetary budget, he said.

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