India targets fluorosis problem with new identification system

NEW DELHI, India: The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) in New Delhi has said that it has tested a new and simpler system that could help to identify dental fluorosis in the population. The tool is based on photographic information from patients with the conditions gathered from several districts in India, and can be used by health workers without prior knowledge in dentistry.

First tests conducted with the new system by an ICMR Task Force among schoolchildren in the South Delhi and Hisar districts turned out successful, with little difference found in regard to detection rates of dental specialists and field workers unfamiliar with fluorosis, the Council said. With this tool, the organisation hopes not only to help health workers nationwide to detect the condition its early stages but also to gather reliable national data on the prevalence of fluorosis, which is considered to be a major public health problem owing to the excessive intake of fluoride through drinking water in most parts of India.

Although representative data in the country is lacking, results from different studies suggest a high prevalence in areas with high water fluoridation. If the condition is not detected, it can lead to skeletal fluorosis, a condition that causes bone to lose its flexibility through the accumulation of osteous tissue. It has also been associated with renal failure, atherosclerosis and other diseases.

Fluorosis is commonly identified through Dean’s Index, a five-stage classification system developed in the late 1950s by H. Trendley Dean, one of the most prominent advocates for water fluoridation in the United States. Alternatives include the Thylstrup-Frejerekov Index, developed in Denmark in the 1970s, and the US National Institutes for Dental Research’s Total Surface Index of Fluorosis.

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The Philippines has announced modifications to its Negative Investment List that, among other things, will remove barriers for businesses from the ASEAN region to invest in specialised dental clinics and other health care related businesses.

According to the new regulations, which took effect in April, foreigners are now allowed to own between 67 and 70 per cent of a health care related business that is based in the South East Asian country.

Foreign direct investments to Indonesia currently exceed domestic direct investments by almost 100 per cent. In 2015, foreigners invested more than $270 billion (US$22 million) in the Philippines economy.