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EARLY EOCENE LAND MAMMALS FROM VASTAN LIGNITE MINE, DISTRICT SURAT (GUJARAT), WESTERN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

We report the discovery of an early Eocene (middle Ypresian, approximately 52 Ma) land mammal fauna from sediments associated with the lignite deposits of Vastan Mine, District Surat, Gujarat. The fauna represents the oldest known Cenozoic land mammals from India. As presently identified, the assemblage comprises a total of 12 species, all new, representing perissodactyls (4 species placed in a new family); proteutherians (2 species representing two families); apatotherians (one species); insectivores (2 species, one belonging to a new family); artiodactyls (one species representing a new genus); rodents and bats (one species each). This is a largely endemic fauna with some holarctic elements. A detailed study of the assemblage and its implications is in progress and is expected to provide significant insight into our understanding of mammalian dispersal and India's evolving biogeographic affinities in the context of India-Asia collision.

Key words: Eocene, land mammals, India-Asia collision