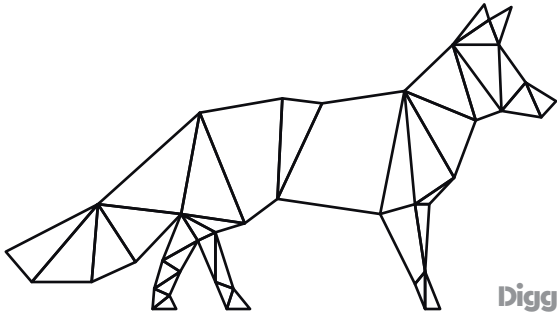




Digging up unusual, interesting tidbits in and around the business scene

Hip to the cause: Albert Luthuli Hospital has partnered with the private Busamed Hospital to make it easier for patients to get surgery

HEALTH CARE

Surgical intervention

Years slashed from waiting lists as state and private hospitals work together

Chris Bateman

● A public-private collaboration is being used in two KwaZulu-Natal hospitals to cut costs and time for surgeries.

Those involved say it has proved highly effective in slashing years off waiting lists and relieving patients' suffering and could be followed country-wide.

As is often the case with health-care innovation in South Africa, a doctor has used his struggles in the state sector to engineer a nimble way to unlock efficiencies of scale and halve the costs of knee and hip surgeries – and even other procedures.

Waiting lists for orthopaedic surgery at the Inkosi Albert Luthuli Central Hospital in Durban's Cato Manor are between two-and-a-half and three years, with surgical lists running at 40% below capacity, according to senior surgeons working there. As one of a small number of central hospitals in South Africa, the tertiary hospital provides specialist services unavailable elsewhere

in KZN and serves as a hub to train health workers.

Freezing posts for specialists and registrars in state hospitals has led to understaffed ICUs, too few doctors, shortages of surgical consumables and delays in diagnostic tests that health workers say are costing lives and aggravating patient conditions.

Situations like the one at the Albert Luthuli Hospital are happening across the country.

Now a new surgery partnership in Durban is using beds and theatres at the private Busamed Hospital in Hillcrest over weekends for Albert Luthuli patients.

Orthopaedic surgeon Michiel Ter Haar, who qualified as a game ranger and then followed his father and brother into medicine, worked at Albert Luthuli as a specialist hip and knee surgeon before going into private practice in 2020.

When he began working at Albert Luthuli in 2012, the orthopaedic surgery waiting list was five to six months. It

has deteriorated since then, but Ter Haar saw the potential for public-private collaboration between state and private hospitals. The demand for theatre time across all disciplines at Albert Luthuli over the past 14 years has resulted in six orthopaedic theatre lists per week being reduced to just one or two per week.

In the past 14 months, eight anaesthetists have resigned from Albert Luthuli, some citing burnout. There is a shortage of ICU and theatre nurses and only one cardiologist.

"This public-private partnership intervention goes a long way to helping out," says Ter Haar, who dispatches a Busamed patient transport to collect two surgical patients from Albert Luthuli on a Friday morning. He and a Luthuli colleague operate on the advanced arthritic knees or hips at Busamed Hospital the

Dramatic results:
Michiel Ter Haar

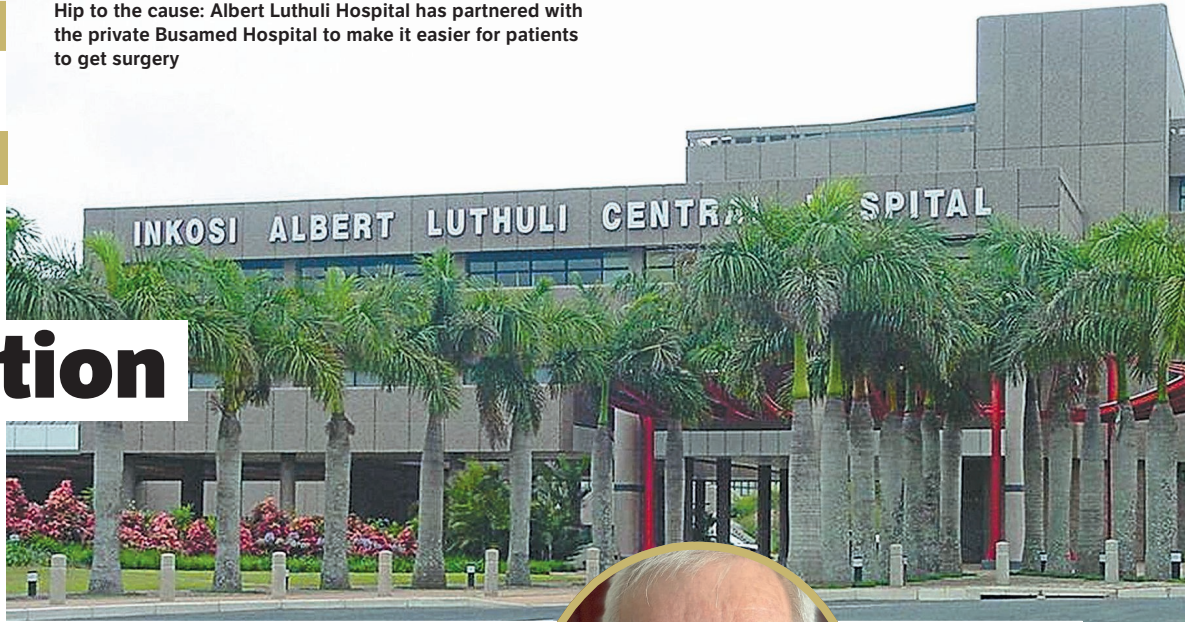
same morning. After operations patients are kept in the private hospital, seen by an orthopaedic surgeon and receive daily physiotherapy until discharge, usually after day two or three.

After being discharged from the private hospital, patients go to Albert Luthuli two weeks later for routine outpatient consultations. The model uses available theatre time in the private sector at vastly reduced costs.

Busamed doctors and physiotherapists taking part in the collaboration take a 65% cut in fees, and the KZN health department supplies the implants. Ter Haar's company, Arthroplasty Solutions, foots the health-worker bills and pays for theatre consumables.

The final cost comparison is dramatic.

A global arthroplasty fee to get a joint replacement done in





the private sector is R165,000 per person, he says.

“Our entire project costs R58,000 per patient. That’s a reduction of about 65%. There’s no capital layout; we use the existing infrastructure and facilities, no overheads – and management is done pro bono. Plus the profit margin is extremely low,” says Ter Haar.

“There are many other health-care projects in the country that are done for free. But to have a sustainable model one has to pay the people involved, even if it is at a reduced rate. This is what sets this unique model apart from all other health-care models,” he says.

Ter Haar and his colleagues have done 102 joint replacements in 13 months in what he sees as a three-phase project.

The first completed phase was to create a well-functioning model and show that the public-private partnership works. The second will be a rollout in other provinces, probably the Western Cape in January. Phase three will create a waiting list fund, spreading to other surgical disciplines and encouraging business, medical aids, hospital groups and pharmaceutical companies to back it.

“The big difference is private hospitals function so much better,” Ter Haar says.

The project has caught the attention of national director-general of health Sandile Buthelezi, who has met Ter Haar and intends to meet with Le Roux Viljoen, a Cape Town-based colleague of Ter Haar.

Viljoen’s company, The Surgical Assistant, uses an app to supply vetted and qualified surgical assistants to private surgeons while using a corporate-funded NGO to help train registrars in the public sector.

Viljoen won third place in the SA Breweries social entrepreneur of the year awards last month. ✕

ANOTHER WEEK



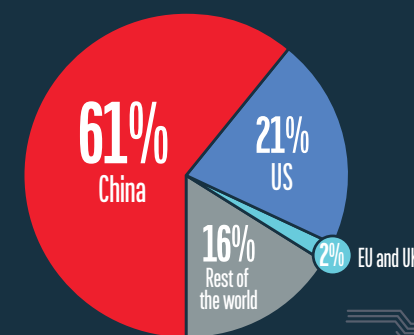
Reuters/Mohamed Abd El Ghany

THE PAST MEETS THE FUTURE Part of an exhibition of modern art set against the backdrop of ancient Egypt opened this week in front of the Great Pyramids of Giza in Cairo. Art D’Egypte’s ‘Forever Is Now’ project brings together contemporary artists from around the world to create installations that rise to meet the weight of history. The exhibition runs until December 6

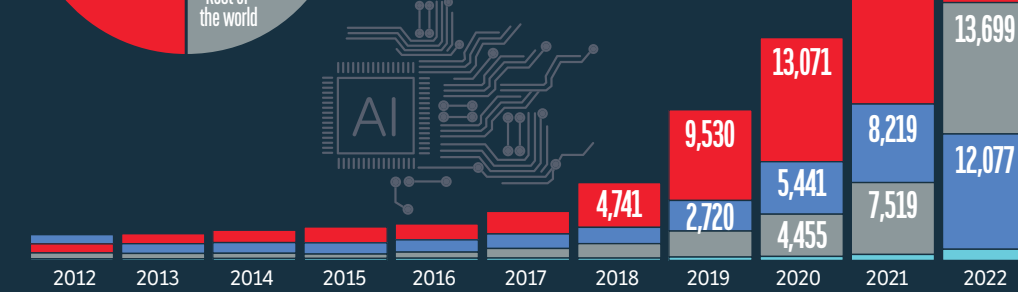
BY THE NUMBERS

NUMBER OF AI PATENTS GRANTED ANNUALLY

Cumulative share of granted AI patents



China overtook the US in 2013 and since then has seen enormous growth in the number of AI patents granted. In 2022 (the latest year for which data is available), the country was granted more patents than the rest of the world combined



Source: Visual Capitalist

“He beat the wrap.”

A poster in the US after Sean Dunn was acquitted of a misdemeanour after throwing a packed sandwich at a federal agent during a protest

TRENDING

G20 wind shifts

The US’s snub of Joburg summit is a reminder of China’s withdrawal from Africa in the 15th century

Paul Ash

● Inside the Fort of São Sebastião on Mozambique Island, which for 500 years was Portugal’s capital of its East African colony, there is a museum in which one of the prize exhibits is a Ming vase.

The vase stands out amid a collection of colonial detritus – rattan chairs, tapestries of shipwrecks, heavy furniture, cannons – for its simple beauty.

Ask any of the guides where it came from and they will simply say “China”. Another guide, standing on the ramparts of the fort overlooking the Indian Ocean, waves his hand over the glistening sea and says, “lots of Chinese pottery there”.

The Chinese explorer-admiral Zheng He, who led half a dozen so-called “treasure voyages” from China in the early 15th century, is thought to have called at Mozambique Island almost a century before the Portuguese arrived.

That China turned inward after the end of the voyages in the mid-15th century has



The US flag is still on the poster, but no-one from President Donald Trump’s administration is attending the summit Reuters/Siphiwe Sibeko

echoes in what looks like the gradual end of the American Empire and, with it, the influence it wields in global affairs.

So to Nasrec, south of Joburg, where the rubbish has been cleared and the streetlights are working and there are promises that the water will not be throttled at any time when leaders of the G20 nations gather for the conference.

The US snubbed the meeting without so much as an RSVP card saying “the administration regrets ...”. Its reasons seem to be rooted

more in petulance than from any concerns about the G20’s actual relevance. Meanwhile, though China’s Xi Jinping will not attend, his premier, Li Qiang, will.

The growth of Chinese influence across the world, from making the things that the West wants to rebuilding broken railways in Africa, is not new.

But the absence of one of the world’s two super-powers at the G20 feels like a shift in the wind. Admiral Zheng He would have felt it at his back and he would have been very pleased. ✕

DINNER PARTY INTEL...

The topics you have to be able to discuss this week

1. Toad in a whole



The leopard caught on camera in the West Coast National Park got all the fauna fanfare last week. Not so much the moonlight mountain toadlet (*Capensibufo selenophos*). The little amphibian, about 24mm long, is one of the lesser-spotted inhabitants of the Mount David reserve near Hermanus that has been declared a protected area, along with the Lettas Kraal reserve near Touws River in the Klein Karoo, where leopards also roam, along with badgers, brown hyenas and the critically endangered riverine rabbit.

2. Top town

Bloemhof in North West is not the first place that springs to mind for accolades, but a TV competition has declared it “town of the year”. The village of 2,000 was voted tops for towns in South Africa and Namibia. Among the other contenders were Rehoboth in Namibia, Wilderness in the Western Cape and Pennington in KwaZulu-Natal. Bloemhof Dam, at the confluence of the Vaal and Vet rivers, is known for good freshwater angling and hosts international fishing competitions.

3. Worldwide scam

Online scamming is huge, says a report in the London Review of Books. If cybercrime were a national economy, it would be the third largest (behind the US and China), says writer Alexander Clapp. By

2027, scams are expected to cost the world \$27-trillion a year and affect about a third of the global population.

