## Giant palm tree seen from space

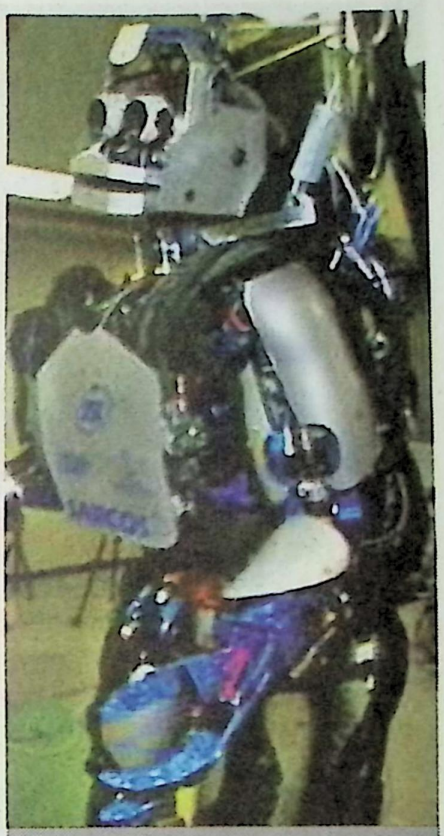


Botanists have discovered a new species of giant self-destructing palm that is so large it can be seen in satellite photos. The plant, which only exists in the remote northwest of Madagascar, is unlike anything found on the island before. The palm is 20m high with leaves 5m long, though for most of its life -- around 100 years -- it is fairly unremarkable apart from its size. No-one had seen it bloom till last year. When it finally did so, botanists found that the tree expended so much energy on its extraordinary flowering pattern that it died!

## US decision on polar bear status on hold

Missing their Jan 9, 2008, deadline, US officials have delayed their decision on whether polar bears should be listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act, saying they need more time to assess climate threat. Unlike previous assessments, the status of the bears relies heavily on climate change and the future of the planet's Arctic ice -- factors that officials say make the assessment more complicated.





## Monkey's thoughts make robot walk

A 12-pound, 32-inch monkey in North Carolina has made a 200-pound, 5-foot humanoid robot walk on a treadmill in Kyoto, Japan, using only her thoughts. It is the first time that brain signals have been used to make a robot walk, say neuroscientists at Duke University. The experiment, they say, may lead to a brain-machine interface that could make paralysed people walk again. Electrodes in the brain would send signals to a cellphone-like device worn on the hip that would relay those signals to a pair of braces -- a kind of external skeleton -- worn on the legs.