



FINDINGS

American and Russian scientists announced the creation of a new superheavy element, known as element 118 or ununoctium, which was generated by firing calcium ions at californium; three atoms resulted from the experiments, and each lasted a small fraction of a second. Physicists in Geneva realized that several years ago they had accidentally combined matter and antimatter into something called protonium. An elementary school science class determined that popcorn pops more efficiently and tastes better when the kernels are first sent into space; Air Force scientists concluded that a ring of superconducting magnets could fling satellites into orbit, or weapons across continents; and roboticists successfully programmed a swarm of dumb robots to move an object decorated with red lights across a floor toward a white target. An American DNA computer learned to play tic-tac-toe. Earth's Milankovitch oscillations were linked to extinctions, and an astronomer suggested that the Jovian moon Titan might be covered with 2.6 kilometers of fluffy ethane-soaked dust. Nanotechnologists were using nanoparticles to make better, longer-lasting eyedrops. Antarctica's ozone hole broke a new record. The space-junk problem was just getting worse.

It was noticed that the Chandrasekhar Limit, which is supposed to dictate how large white dwarfs can get before they explode into supernovae, doesn't always apply, which might lead to problems, because that limit has been the foundation for decades of astrophysical science, including estimates of the size of the universe. Researchers created a new kind of transistor by coating a tobacco mosaic virus with platinum nanoparticles, and a new study found that a cup of black tea can relieve

stress. Other studies have found that coffee can increase stress. Scientists confirmed that losing money is scary. The pope was planning to abolish Limbo. Lesbians have more orgasms; dung beetles with ostentatious horns tend to have smaller testicles; too much testosterone can kill brain cells; and people who look at black-and-white pictures of bananas tend to see a slight yellow tint in the fruit.

A new survey of in-vitro fertilization clinics revealed that some deaf people have been using pre-implantation genetic diagnosis to make sure that their children will be deaf. Deaths from premature births were on the rise, and scientists said that breast-feeding does not result in smarter babies. Breast-fed babies are smarter because their mothers are smarter. Norwegian researchers announced that teens who drink too much soda have a higher incidence of mental problems. A study revealed that teenagers who skip family meals are more likely to smoke and get drunk, and it was discovered that low doses of Prozac can make adolescent hamsters more aggressive toward their cage mates. Chinese surgeons performed the world's first penis transplant but later had to cut the penis off because the patient and his wife didn't like it. New research on rats and gerbils suggested that taking methamphetamine right after a stroke might be good for the brain. Scientists said that the benefits of eating fish outweigh the fact that they are increasingly contaminated with mercury and other toxins. Chinese officials claimed that farming bears for their bile has helped increase wild bear populations. Oceanic dead zones were getting bigger. Millions of dead anchovies washed up on a Spanish beach. ■

*"Mechanical Dodo Skeletons #3," a digital chromogenic print, by Harri Kallio.
Courtesy Bonni Benrubi Gallery, New York City*