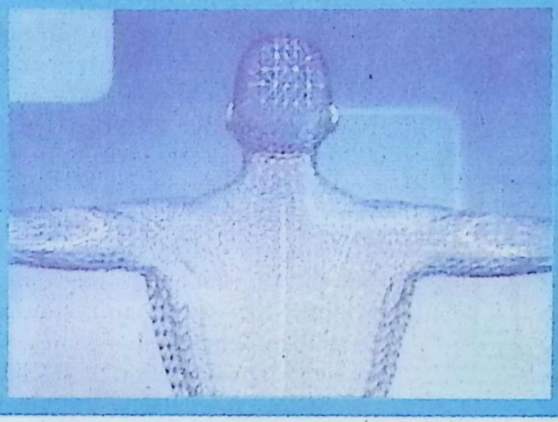
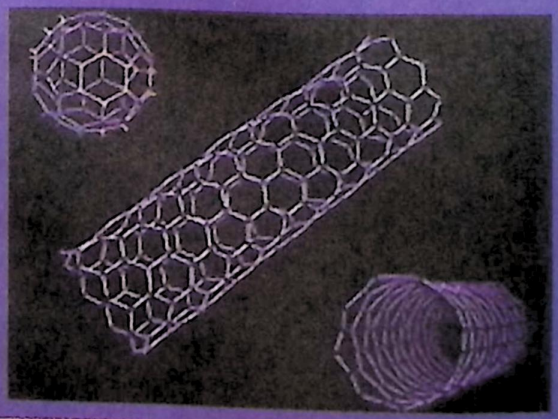
Mirrors may fool phantom limb pain

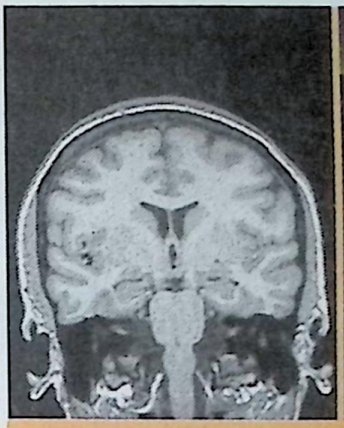
Viewing the reflected image of an intact limb in a mirror can fool the mind into thinking that a lost leg or foot still exists, dramatically relieving phantom limb pain, researchers report. At least 9 out of 10 amputees report feeling pain in the missing limb. The sensation that the arm or leg is stuck in the wrong position can be excruciating and pain drugs often do little to help. Now studies suggest that using a mirror to trick the mind may help. Doctors don't know why it works, but it appears to reconcile sensations coming from the severed nerves.

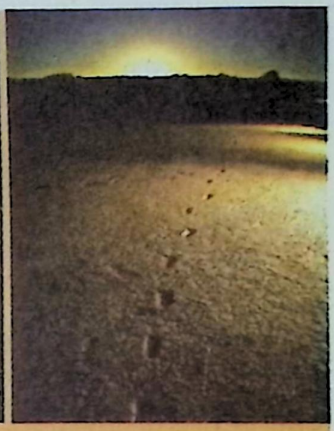


'Darkest ever' material created

The "darkest ever" substance known to science has been made in a US laboratory. The material was created from carbon nanotubes -- sheets of carbon just one atom thick rolled up into cylinders. Researchers say it is the closest thing yet to the ideal black material, which absorbs light perfectly at all angles and over all wavelengths. The discovery is expected to have applications in the fields of electronics and solar energy.







SCIENCE NEWS

Fears for oldest human footprints
Fossilised footsteps are posing a preservation puzzle, as threats to the world's oldest surviving hominid tracks in Tanzania are again stirring debate over how to best protect the 3.7-million-year-old imprints.

Ageing makes the imagination wither
Memory decline in old age may also mean a less vivid imagination. Old age does more than stealthily steal away our most cherished memories: it also seems to diminish our ability to imagine things, say scientists.

Brain 'seismology' helps predict epileptic attacks
Both start with barely perceptible tremors that lead up to a cataclysmic climaxnow it seems that the similarities between earthquakes and epileptic seizures run deep. Seismology could even hold the key to new ways of predicting and avoiding seizures, says new research.

India aims for 'quantum jump' in science
The Indian government has announced unprecedented funding for science education and research, saying it is a top priority. A range of schemes are being planned to attract students and replenish government agencies' shrinking pool of scientific personnel.

Ancient dinosaur fossil haul returned to China
A 100-million-year-old haul of dinosaur eggs and fossils from China, smuggled illegally into Australia, headed back to Beijing in January. Australian handed over more than 750 kilograms of fossils, estimated to be worth millions of dollars, to Chinese authorities.

The battle of the butterflies and the ants
Parasitic caterpillars illustrate local evolution as never before. Butterflies that trick ants into helping to raise their young are driving an evolutionary arms race between the two species, researchers have found.

Science Forum is compiled and edited by Rashida Ahmad.
Sources: Nature, New Scientist, BBC Online.