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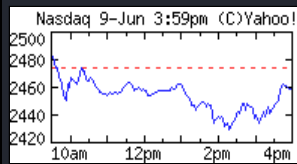
 **56°F**
Light Rain
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QUOTES...

High achievement always takes place in the framework of high expectation. -*Jack Kinder*

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Physicists Have 'Solved' Mystery of Levitation



DISCUSSIONS

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by **mr. Z**

[Today at 02:50:41 PM]

Did You Know It Was So Ea...
by **Dalek_Caan**

[Today at 12:05:10 PM]

Chinese quake lake still ...
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[Today at 12:02:00 PM]

US hit by heatwave and fl...
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[Today at 11:59:47 AM]

Supercomputer sets petaf...
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[Today at 11:55:00 AM]

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Levitation has been elevated from being pure science fiction to science fact, according to a study reported today by physicists.

In earlier work the same team of theoretical physicists showed that invisibility cloaks are feasible.



Now, in another report that sounds like it comes out of the pages of a Harry Potter book, the University of St Andrews team has created an 'incredible levitation effects' by engineering the force of nature which normally causes objects to stick together.



Professor Ulf Leonhardt and Dr Thomas Philbin, from the University of St Andrews in Scotland, have worked out a way of reversing this phenomenon, known as the Casimir force, so that it repels instead of attracts.

Their discovery could ultimately lead to frictionless micro-machines with moving parts that levitate. But they say that, in principle at least, the same effect could be used to levitate bigger objects too, even a person.

The Casimir force is a consequence of quantum mechanics, the theory that describes the world of atoms and subatomic particles that is not only the most successful theory of physics but also the most baffling.

The force is due to neither electrical charge or gravity, for example, but the fluctuations in all-pervasive energy fields in the intervening empty space between the objects and is one reason atoms stick together, also explaining a "dry glue" effect that enables a gecko to walk across a ceiling.

Now, using a special lens of a kind that has already been built, Prof Ulf Leonhardt and Dr Thomas Philbin report in the New Journal of Physics they can engineer the Casimir force to repel, rather than attract.

Because the Casimir force causes problems for nanotechnologists, who are trying to build electrical circuits and tiny mechanical devices on silicon chips, among other things, the team believes the feat could initially be used to stop tiny objects from sticking to each other.

Prof Leonhardt explained, "The Casimir force is the ultimate cause of friction in the nano-world, in particular in some microelectromechanical systems.

Such systems already play an important role - for example tiny mechanical devices which triggers a car airbag to inflate or those which power tiny 'lab on chip' devices used for drugs testing or chemical analysis.

Micro or nano machines could run smoother and with less or no friction at all if one can manipulate the force." Though it is possible to levitate objects as big as humans, scientists are a long way off developing the technology for such feats, said Dr Philbin.

The practicalities of designing the lens to do this are daunting but not impossible and levitation "could happen over quite a distance".

Prof Leonhardt leads one of four teams - three of them in Britain - to have put forward a theory in a peer-reviewed journal to achieve invisibility by making light waves flow around an object - just as a river flows undisturbed around a smooth rock. Telegraph.Co.Uk

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