

The Tele Scouter is currently still a prototype, although NEC plans to start selling the system to businesses next year. The Japanese manufacturer admits that the device's translation capabilities are limited at the moment, so it will market the device as a wearable, hands-free data display.

NEC envisages that it could be used by engineers and technicians to view user guides or manuals while installing and repairing hardware.

One day you may be able to wear glasses that translate other languages in real-time and display them onto the glasses' lenses so you can read it, if NEC is successful.

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THE ARAL SEA MAN-MAID DISASTER

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The destruction of the Aral Sea is one of the most staggering disasters of the twentieth century. Once the world's fourth-largest lake and inland saline body of water the Aral Sea has been steadily shrinking since the 1960s after the rivers that fed it were diverted by Soviet Union irrigation projects. As of 2007, the Aral Sea's surface area was only 10% of its original size. Nearly fivefold increase in salinity had killed most of its natural flora and fauna and left people living in the area in sufferings from a lack of fresh water and health problems.

The History of Aral

Straddling the borders of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan and surrounded by the Karakum and Kyzylkum deserts, the Aral has been for thousands of years an inland saltwater lake with no outlet. Because of its size and significance it was regarded by people from ancient times as a sea. Two main rivers, the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya, kept the salty lake in balance to support a commercial fishery, tourism, and a true oasis in a very dry, remote region of Central Asia. As many as 20 species of fish flourished in the giant glacial bathtub, and life along the shore was intrinsically linked to the inland sea.

Doomed by the USSR

In 1918, the Soviet government decided that the two rivers that fed the Aral Sea, the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya, would be diverted to irrigate the desert, in order to attempt to grow rice, melons, cereals, and cotton. This

was part of the Soviet plan for cotton, or "white gold", to become a major export. The construction of irrigation canals began on a large scale in the 1940s. Many of the canals were poorly built, allowing water to leak or evaporate. As a result, most of the sea's water supply had been diverted, and in the 1960s the Aral Sea began to shrink. The disappearance of the lake was no surprise to the Soviets; they expected it to happen long before.

The consequences of the Aral Sea catastrophe

As water has been drained from the rivers for cotton farming, the sea's salinity increased more than 3 times. In addition, more and more water has been taken from the rivers to the irrigation canals. As a result, the sea's surface decreased by more than two times and its volume more than 4 times just in a few decades. Drinking water supplies have dwindled, and the water now is contaminated with pesticides and other agricultural chemicals as well as bacteria and viruses. The farms in the area used some highly toxic pesticides and other harmful chemicals. For decades, these chemicals have been deposited into the Aral Sea. When the wind blows across the dried-up sea, it carries dust containing these toxic chemicals. All these devastating consequences nearly destroyed the ecosystem of the Aral Sea. The environmental degradation intertwined with both poverty and the weak social and economic development in the area has considerably deteriorated the health of the area's population.

Possible environmental solutions

Many different solutions to the different problems have been suggested over the years, varying in feasibility and cost, like improving the quality of irrigation canals, redirecting water from the Volga, Ob and Irtysh rivers and pumping sea water into the Aral Sea from the Caspian Sea via a pipeline. But rather a little work is being done. In August 2005 the dam connected two remnants of the former Aral Sea – the South and the North Aral - was completed by Kazakhstan; since then the water level of the North Aral has risen, and its salinity has decreased. The South Aral Sea, which lies in poorer Uzbekistan, is largely abandoned to its fate.

The Aral Sea disaster has been a stark reminder of man tinkering with the forces of nature without consideration for the long – term after effects on an extremely vulnerable ecosystem and the people who have for centuries resided along its shores.

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