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- > Dial Indicators and Indicating Gauges (14)
- > Engineering Metrology Introduction (16)
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- > ISO 9000 Systems: Concepts and Practices (8)
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- > Linear Measurements (65)
- > Machine Tool Metrology (9)
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- > Measurement and Testing of Gears (8)
- > Measurement by Light Wave Interference (11)
- > Measurement of Surface Finish (14)
- > Measuring Machines (35)
- > Metrology of Screw Thread (4)
- Miscellaneous Measurements (17)
- > Non-Destructive Testing of Metal and Allovs (16)
- > Quality Control and Quality Assurance
- > Standards of Measurements (15)
- > Statistical Quality Control (34)
- > Straightness, Flatness, Squareness, Parallelism, Circularity and Rotation (11)
- > Testing and Calibration of Gauges and Dynamic Measurement (17)
- > Total Quality Management (9)
- Exam and Interview Questions (94)
- > Engineering Mechanics (20)
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Micro-Windmills Could Help Charge the Electronics of the Future

Posted By Vishnu On February 24th, 2014 01:00 AM | Golem Bot



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Everyone's been there. You're in the middle of an important call and all of a sudden your cellphone urgently chimes in your ear, alerting you that its battery is about to kick the bucket. Although battery life has long been the bane of mobile existence, a new microelectromechanical systems (MEMS) technology could solve the ever-present problem of recharging your mobile device.

Measuring in at only 1.8 mm at its widest point, the key to possibly endless energy is a micro-scale windmill so small a single grain of rice could support ten of the tiny devices. Created by research associate Smitha Rao and professor J.-C. Chiao, the Lilliputian windmill was designed by blending origami folding with conventional semi-conductor layout technique. By uniting the two processes, the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA) team

was able to create complex, self-assembling, 3-dimensional mechanical structures from 2dimensional metal plates.

Constructed using a nickel-alloy, Rao and Chiao's windmill has eschewed the main problem facing MEMS machines—their fragility. After successful structural tests of their micro-windmills last September, the UTA team is confident that their choice of material will make their devices strong enough to handle any industry use.

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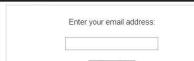
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