

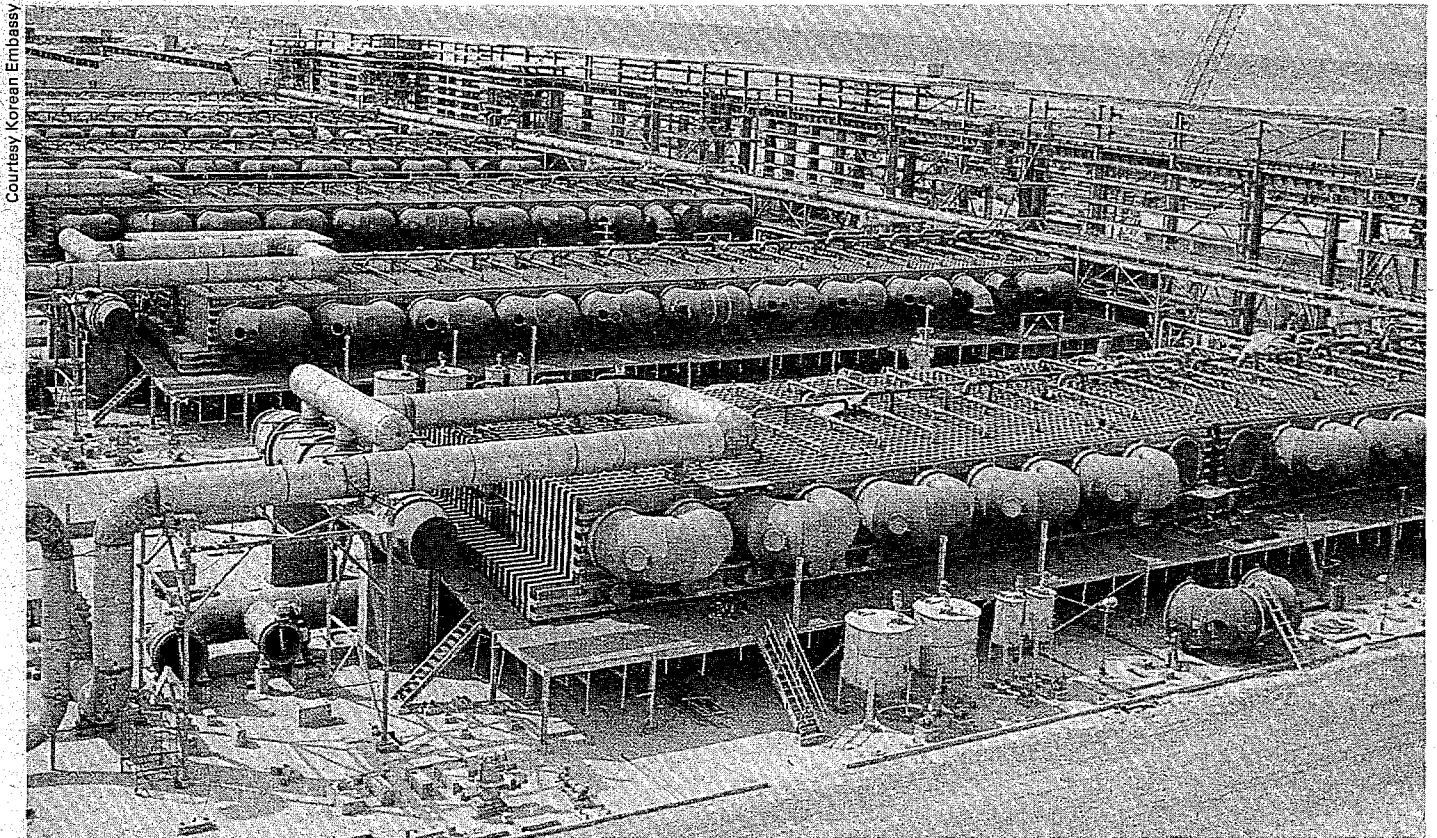
Water for all

by Thomas Land

Mankind's ancient dream of producing vast quantities of fresh water from the sea is becoming an economic reality. Several large desalination plants based on a new, cost-effective, reverse-osmosis process are either being built or are at their advanced stages of planning in the Americas, the Middle East and elsewhere.

The requisite technology is still expensive, calling for heavy initial capital investment and an operating cost of something like four dollars per thousand gallons of water, limiting the present scope of the process to the needs of the

important agreement of collaboration recently reached between the University of Toronto and the King Saud University of Riyadh. The five-year, multi-million dollar accord calls for joint research, the training of Saudi students in Canada and the dispatch of Canadian professors to Saudi Arabia to develop postgraduate training as well as advanced research. Dean Gordon Slemon of the engineering and applied science faculty of Toronto University says, "This is the most developed relationship I am aware of between the Saudis and any North American university."



Courtesy Korean Embassy

Desalination plant in Saudi Arabia

profitable agro-industries and the big cities of the rich world. But it holds out the realistic promise of unlimited supplies of pollution-free fresh water within the foreseeable future when further technological innovations are likely to make the process economically accessible even to the poorest communities.

Such an achievement could be attained through an

Their joint projects will cover the areas of greatest Saudi concern, such as water, construction, petroleum engineering and transport.

Global research in the reverse-osmosis process is en-

Thomas Land is an author and foreign correspondent who writes on global affairs from London, England.