

Re: Varan Sivaram, The Global Warming Wild Card. May 2017 Scientific American

To the Editor,

A vital element missing from Sivaram's otherwise balanced analysis is the role of the Liquid Fluoride Thorium Reactor (LFTR, "lifter") in meeting the global-warming challenge head-on. His one reference to nuclear energy ("Chronic construction delays also rule out a major role for nuclear reactors") implies that nuclear energy can be dismissed without regret; and if "nuclear reactors" means conventional reactors, the type we have today, dismissal would be appropriate, and due to far more distressing problems than construction hassles. Yet, all the problems with our conventional reactors are solved in the LFTR, a very different type. Funding for final commercial development must be raised; you can't order a LFTR from the factory yet. However, LFTRs promise to be the optimum source (thoroughly outshining natural gas) of heat for reliable, continuous, load-following electric power, standing alone or backing solar and wind, emitting no CO₂. Planners owe it to India's energy future, as well as to our responsibility for the health of our planet, to carefully evaluate the LFTR as a key element in India's evolving energy platform.

David Copeland
Laramie, Wyoming