EDITORIALS - 5TH NOV 2026

1. Anaemia burden — iron alone is no solution (GS Paper I Society, GS Paper II Governance)

This editorial '**Anaemia burden — iron alone is no solution**' was published in **The Hindu** on 5th Nov 2026, highlights the limitations of **salt fortification** and the need for a comprehensive, **cause-specific approach** to anaemia.

Double-fortified salt: design limitations

- **NFHS-5** found over half of women and nearly two-thirds of young children anaemic; widespread salt consumption establishes delivery convenience, not **efficacy**.
- Indians consume roughly twice the **WHO** recommendation of 5 grams of salt daily; salt-based iron delivery conflicts with India's **30% salt-reduction target**, while reduced consumption lowers iron intake.
- **Salt intake** varies by age, sex and region; women and young children consume least, potentially receiving the smallest **iron doses** despite greater need.

Safety, absorption and cumulative exposure

- The body lacks regulated **iron excretion**, permitting accumulation and oxidative stress; the **2006 Pemba trial** linked supplementation to increased hospitalisations and deaths in malaria-endemic children, while a 2015 Kenyan trial found pathogenic gut changes and increased diarrhoea.
- **Haemoglobinopathies** complicate universal delivery: transfusion-dependent thalassaemia increases iron-overload risks; screening roughly **800 million PDS beneficiaries** before consumption is impractical.
- Fortified rice through PDS, PM POSHAN and ICDS already overlaps with **iron-folic acid supplementation**; adding fortified salt without analysing **cumulative exposure** risks excessive intake.
- **Non-haem iron** absorption is reduced by phytates, tea and coffee polyphenols, and milk calcium; salt consumed with meals therefore delivers iron under **low-absorption conditions**.
- **Infection and inflammation** suppress absorption through hepcidin, while unabsorbed iron can feed harmful gut microbes; supervised trials inadequately capture cooking losses, uneven dosing and **dietary variation**.

Multiple causes and programme gaps

- **Iron deficiency** accounts for roughly half of anaemia globally; India's **Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey, 2016–18**, likewise found it explained only part of childhood and adolescent anaemia.
- **Non-iron causes** include folate/B12 deficiency, infections, hookworm, malaria, poor sanitation, haemoglobinopathies and undernutrition; early pregnancy and menstrual losses compound risks, while **measurement methods** affect prevalence estimates.

- The revised **7x7x7 approach** broadens interventions, but continued reliance on iron-folic acid tablets faces adherence problems and gastrointestinal side effects; **haemoglobin testing** alone cannot establish causation.
- **Diagnostic gaps** persist in ferritin, B12 and inflammation testing; food affordability, deworming, malaria control and sanitation receive insufficient attention, while **digital tracking** prioritises tests and tablets over outcomes.

Evidence and policy direction

- **Peru** reduced childhood anaemia through political priority, individual tracking, supplements, micronutrient powders, cash transfers and regional accountability; pandemic-related reversal underscored dependence on **sustained service delivery**.
- **Vietnam** combined weekly supplementation, deworming and NaFeEDTA-fortified fish sauce with rising incomes and dietary diversity; gains reflected **combined interventions** adapted to local diets.
- Before national expansion, **district-level pilots** should measure ferritin, haemoglobin and inflammation, assess cumulative exposure, and monitor harm in malaria-endemic and haemoglobinopathy-prone areas; **targeted fortification** should use better-absorbed iron forms.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

The hidden economic cost of anaemia

- **Learning losses:** Anaemia weakens attention; a Shaanxi, China, trial found micronutrient supplementation improved haemoglobin levels and mathematics scores.
- **Lower earnings:** Nationally representative Indian surveys associated anaemia among men with fewer working hours and lower wages.
- **Developmental disadvantage:** An Indian preschool trial found micronutrient powders reduced anaemia and improved expressive language, though benefits were not attributable to iron alone.
- **Intergenerational burden:** Maternal anaemia is associated with premature birth and low birth weight, potentially extending health-related disadvantages across generations.
- **Gendered costs:** WHO identifies anaemia-related fatigue and reduced productivity among reproductive-age women, constraining their economic contribution.
- **National losses:** A 2020 Chatham House analysis estimated India's anaemia-related worker-productivity losses at $20 billion, approximately 0.7% of GDP.
- **Prevention dividend:** WHO cites potential economic returns of $12 per $1 invested in reducing anaemia among women.

2. Science should move past 'top 2%' label (GS Paper III Science and Technology)

This editorial '**Science should move past 'top 2%' label**' was published in **The Hindu** on 5th Nov 2026, highlights the limitations of **citation-based rankings** and the need to recognise scientific contributions on **merit**.

Limitations of citation-based assessment

- India's growing representation in the **'top 2% scientists' database** brings visibility, but inclusion cannot establish **research excellence**, nor exclusion imply lack of merit.
- Creators John Ioannidis and collaborators caution that **Scopus records** do not establish originality; author-profile accuracy and disciplinary classification affect results, while **regional-language contributions** remain excluded.
- **Impact scores** partly depend on author position, whose significance varies across disciplines; **citation counts**, calculated with and without self-citations, cannot distinguish appreciation, criticism or passing reference.
- A **2023 analysis** by John Philip found 12 of 71 physics and two of 66 chemistry **Nobel laureates** from 1998–2022 missing, demonstrating the exclusion of significant contributors.
- A **2026 Scientometrics study** found science journalists in the 2025 database and an author with **217 retracted papers**, exposing limitations in distinguishing original research, reporting and research quality.

Implications for research and recognition

- Treating database inclusion as a goal may push young scientists towards **citation-rich topics**, undermining independent interests and **sustained research** whose fundamental or practical outcomes require years.
- The **Swiss National Science Foundation** asks applicants to omit citation counts and journal/institutional rankings from CVs, prioritising **research quality** over numerical proxies.
- **Team contributions** deserve recognition through outcomes: Chandrayaan-3, SHAKTI microprocessors, NexCAR19 cancer therapy, indigenous 4G technology and CERVAVAC demonstrate **knowledge advancement** and practical benefits irrespective of database inclusion.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

The public funding dilemma in research assessment

- **Delayed returns:** Decades of NIH-supported research enabled mRNA COVID-19 vaccines, illustrating why short evaluation cycles can undervalue foundational science.
- **Risk tolerance:** NIH's High-Risk, High-Reward programme supports transformative ideas that may struggle under conventional research-funding mechanisms.
- **Public-interest priorities:** DNDi's nonprofit model addresses commercially neglected diseases, including kala-azar and sleeping sickness, demonstrating research value beyond market returns.
- **Administrative burden:** The UK's 2020 bureaucracy-reduction initiative sought to simplify research funding processes, preserving researchers' time for substantive work.

- **Institutional equity:** ANRF's PAIR programme connects leading institutions with emerging universities through mentorship, shared infrastructure and collaborative research.
- **Broader evaluation:** UKRI's Résumé for Research and Innovation recognises wider skills and contributions beyond publication records.
- **Public access:** DNDi promotes data sharing and public-interest use of publicly or philanthropically funded research, broadening accountability beyond academic outputs.

3. Three steps COP should take for tangible outcomes (GS Paper III Environment)

This editorial '**Three steps COP should take for tangible outcomes**' was published in **The Indian Express** on 5th Nov 2026, highlights the need for verifiable **progress reporting**, transparent **climate finance** and accountability for **voluntary pledges**.

Implementation ambitions and delivery gaps

- **COP31** divides responsibilities: Turkey hosts, holds the presidency and leads the non-negotiated Action Agenda; **Australia** steers negotiations.
- Following finalisation of **Paris Agreement rules**, negotiations increasingly concern implementation methods and progress; the voluntary **Action Agenda** mobilises non-state actors faster than negotiated outcomes.
- Voluntary **2035 targets** include electricity meeting 35% of final energy demand, halving global waste growth and reducing **building energy-use intensity** by at least 25%.
- **CEEW** finds only around **5% of 203 cooperative climate initiatives** launched since 2015 have met their goals, exposing the gap between pledges and delivery.
- **2035 NDCs** remained outstanding despite a February 2025 deadline; only Colombia and Turkey had filed second **Biennial Transparency Reports** by late October, potentially leaving COP31 without timely implementation evidence.

Finance and accountability

- Developing countries need **climate finance** for both adaptation and mitigation; inadequate support forces trade-offs between absorbing unavoidable impacts and **reducing preventable emissions**.
- Vulnerable states view **NDC implementation** as the barometer for 1.5°C; developing countries perceive the Global North's scrutiny as deflecting attention from its own **commitments**.
- **UNFCCC synthesis reports** inform finance dialogues and multilateral progress reviews, enabling exchange of progress and concerns; these mechanisms lack **delivery enforcement**.

Three steps for tangible outcomes

- **Timely reporting:** Turkey should press all parties to submit transparency reports on time and anchor COP31 discussions in **synthesis findings**.

- **Finance transparency:** Developed countries should submit biennial climate-finance communications specifying both **delivered and promised finance**.
- **Annual public scorecards:** The presidency should track voluntary 2035 targets and apply equivalent scrutiny to its **Climate Implementation Bridge**, which seeks to convert national priorities into investable projects.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Climate action through the lens of a just transition

- **Worker protection:** Spain's 2018 coal-transition agreement combined worker safeguards with a €250 million fund for development in affected mining regions.
- **Regional diversification:** The EU's Just Transition Fund supports alternative businesses and labour-market adaptation in regions affected by decarbonisation.
- **Energy affordability:** The EU's Social Climate Fund supports vulnerable households facing energy and transport costs through assistance and cleaner alternatives.
- **Enterprise support:** South Africa's Komati transition project includes incubation and business-development services for local micro, small and medium enterprises.
- **Employment pathways:** Komati's redevelopment combines renewable energy with worker transfers, reskilling and upskilling, linking transition support to employment opportunities.
- **Participatory decisions:** The ILO's Just Transition Guidelines embed government–employer–worker dialogue throughout policymaking, giving affected groups a role in transition planning.
- **Political durability:** France's Yellow Vest movement illustrates how perceived unfairness in low-carbon policies can provoke resistance and delay climate action.