Costs of Tobacco Use

Why in news?

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The Bombay High Court is hearing a PIL which questions the investments by companies and government in tobacco despite its ill-effects.

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What is the impact of tobacco use?

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- Costs of tobacco-related health issues including cases of death added up to around 1.2% of GDP in that year.
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- Tobacco is also a cause for huge deforestation and nutrient depletion in soils.
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- PSU companies that are in the business of insuring lives are investing in products that risks lives.
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How effective are the measures taken?

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- Many anti-tobacco pledges have been signed in the past, but these contributed little to curb the ill-effects of tobacco use.
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- Government has tried to discourage tobacco use by largely taxing its users.
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- However, this approach focuses primarily on the cigarette component of the tobacco.
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- The other forms of tobacco like the bidis and chewing tobacco which are

consumed 4-5 times more than cigarettes are less focussed.
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- So in spite of reduction in share of cigarettes in total consumption of tobacco, the overall consumption has not reduced to any significant level.
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- Besides this, the acreage under tobacco and their production have consistently increased over the years.
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- As a result, efforts to curb tobacco use are hampered by the arguments supporting the farmers involved in this field.
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What is the way forward?

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- The environment ministry could undertake EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) to address the issues with tobacco in the forests.
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- More, importantly the government should revisit its approach on tobacco control.
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Source: Financial Express

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