Costs of Tobacco Use

Why in news?

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

What is the impact of tobacco use?

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

How effective are the measures taken?

- Many anti-tobacco pledges have been signed in the past, but these contributed little to curb the ill-effects of tobacco use.
- Government has tried to discourage tobacco use by largely taxing its users.
- However, this approach focuses primarily on the cigarette component of the tobacco.
- The other forms of tobacco like the bidis and chewing tobacco which are consumed 4-5 times more than cigarettes are less focussed.
- So in spite of reduction in share of cigarettes in total consumption of tobacco, the overall consumption has not reduced to any significant level.
- Besides this, the acreage under tobacco and their production have consistently increased over the years.
- As a result, efforts to curb tobacco use are hampered by the arguments supporting the farmers involved in this field.

What is the way forward?

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