

Gun rise: Illegal factories in Bihar, Bengal make a killing

By Amarnath Tewary

The tribals in Bastar use it. The Maoists in Dandakaranya swear by it. The gangs of Mumbai kill with it, and poachers in Tamil Nadu hunt with it. From Kashmir to Kanyakumari, the trade in illegal, country-made weapons thrives. Such guns include the kind suspected to have been used to murder people like Gauri Lankesh and Gulshan Kumar of T-series. What is more, 53,272 guns were seized nationally, but country-made weapons like the one suspected to have been used to kill Gauri Lankesh flow freely.

There are many variants, to suit every purse and purpose. The tribals in south Chhattisgarh and Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra call it Bharmar, a muzzle loading gun. Easy to make, it can be fired only once but 5 to 6 bullets can be fired at a time. Accuracy is suspect, though. Not that this is a serious setback, going by its widespread use, especially among the lower rung Maoists. The police in Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra continue to recover Bharmars.

The Maharashtra State Crime Records Bureau statistics show, for instance, that in 2015, there were 36 cases of murder by firearms. All of them were unlicensed weapons. In Bengaluru, country-made weapons are favoured by gangsters. Over the last two years, the police have seized 11 of them.

No longer crude

Mumbai police officers scoff at the term ‘country-made gun’ or ‘desi/gavthi katta’. The original katta had just a basic barrel and a trigger mechanism, and each round had to be loaded separately. “The barrel often got damaged after it was used a few times,” says a Central Crime Branch officer in Bengaluru. In 90% of cases, these weapons would be useless after they fired a few rounds. But today’s country-made guns are superior. They are made in factories now. “These guns can be made using a simple lathe. Over the years, illegal gun manufacturers have used the latest knowledge to make revolvers and pistols with magazines that have high tension springs and can hold nine rounds,” says Assistant Commissioner of Police Sunil Deshmukh, Dadar division.

Retired Deputy Commissioner of Police Ambadas Pote adds, “The supply chain is highly organized. Once the manufacturers have an order, facilitated through an agent, they hand over the consignment to clients at spots like bus stops, lodges or secluded spots on highways.”

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1. In para 1, the author uses expressions such as “uses it,” “swear by it,” “kill with it,” and “hunt with it” in a series of four short sentences. The purpose of this repetition is:
 - a. to say that all state governments are unable to do anything about the growing illegal gun culture
 - b. to emphasize the widespread gun culture in our country
 - c. to assert that illegal guns are the most preferred choices for criminals
 - d. to confirm that illegal guns are manufactured everywhere
2. When factories in Bihar and Bengal “make a killing,” they:
 - a. make a lot of money

- b. use guns to kill people
 - c. make a living by killing people
 - d. make a living by selling guns
3. Why do Mumbai police officers scoff (scoff = to speak about something in a mocking way) at the term “country-made weapons?”
4. Which word in the passage means, “the part of the gun that holds bullets before they are fired?”
5. The side-heading, “No longer crude” refers to:
- a. the way the illegal gun business is flourishing across the country
 - b. the increase in the percentage of people using unlicensed guns
 - c. the advanced techniques adopted in the making of guns
 - d. the improvised ways of handing over the consignments to the clients
6. Which one of the following cannot be inferred from the passage?
- a. the use of unlicensed guns is extremely popular across the country; however, some variants are more popular in the lower rungs of the gangs
 - b. both gun manufacturers and distributors seemed to have learnt to be more organized
 - c. country-made guns are increasingly becoming the most preferred choice for many criminals in the country
 - d. country-made guns are more popular in South India than in North India
7. From para 1, identify the part of the sentence from that suggests that there has been no control over the supply of some of the unlicensed guns.
8. Which one of the following best describes the author’s technique in the passage?
- a. informative
 - b. analytical
 - c. critical
 - d. satirical
9. In para 2, it is stated: “There are many variants, to suit every purse and purpose.” What is the meaning of the sentence?
10. Was the original ‘desi katta’ an effective gun? Justify your answer.