Need for Gun Control Laws -US

Why in news?

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A Las Vegas Strip in US witnessed a mass shooting, killing around 60 people and injuring more than 500.

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What are second amendment rights?

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- In 1791, the Bill of Rights, which is the first ten amendments to the Constitution, was adopted.
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- The Bill of Rights provided for **greater constitutional protection for individual liberties** and specified prohibitions on governmental power.
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- The **second amendment** pertains to the right of every citizen to bear arms and ammunition.
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- It was envisaged as a provision to give a sense of freedom to the citizens and for their own defense.
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What is the concern?

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- The constitution makers did not mean this provision for the present sophisticated, automatic-firing killing machines.
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- Also, being a truly federal state, the US states brought in their own rules governing the possession of arms and ammunition.
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- It differs from stricter regulations to those that does not mandate even a license to bear arms and limitation on the numbers.

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- The regional difference and unregulated use have resulted in many instances of gun violence, claiming thousands of innocent lives.
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- On an average, more than 90 Americans lose their lives to gun violence every day.
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- Though the shooter in recent case is suspected for IS links, the need is for a more sensible gun ownership regulation.
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What were the earlier attempts?

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- Many attempts at bringing in gun control regulations failed in the US Congress.
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- The former President Obama launched a final attempt through an executive action.
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- Introduced in 2015, the King-Thompson bill aimed at closing the loopholes in gun laws.
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- It aimed at -
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1. expanding the existing background check system.
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2. The system would cover all commercial firearm sales including those at gun shows, over the internet or in classified ads.
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3. However, it provides reasonable exceptions for family and friend transfers.
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4. boosting funding for federal agencies enforcing the laws.
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5. improving treatment of mental health conditions nationwide.
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- Despite these attempts, the U.S. Congress shows reluctance to take steps.

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- This is primarily because of lobbying by the National Rifle Association and the huge number of gun manufacturers.
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- The gun lobby’s interest is being upheld by a cultural inclination for gun ownership rooted in the Second Amendment.
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What should be done?

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- The US Congress must take efforts to pass the bipartisan King-Thompson legislation.
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- This can strengthen the life-saving background checks that keep guns out of the wrong hands.
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- A Select Committee on Gun Violence could be created to study and report on a sensible legislation addressing other issues in this regard.
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- This can ensure that children and those with mental illnesses don’t have access to guns.
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- The ‘right to bear arms’ would become meaningful only with accompanied responsibilities.
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Source: The Hindu

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