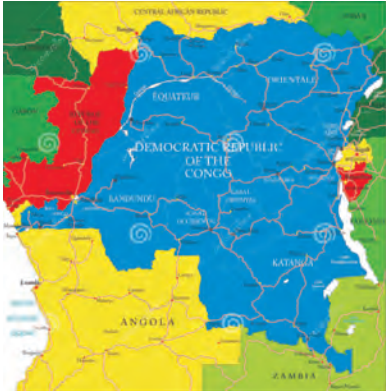




CLICK HERE TO ACTIVATE

LESSON
PART 1





In this lesson, we shall learn about :

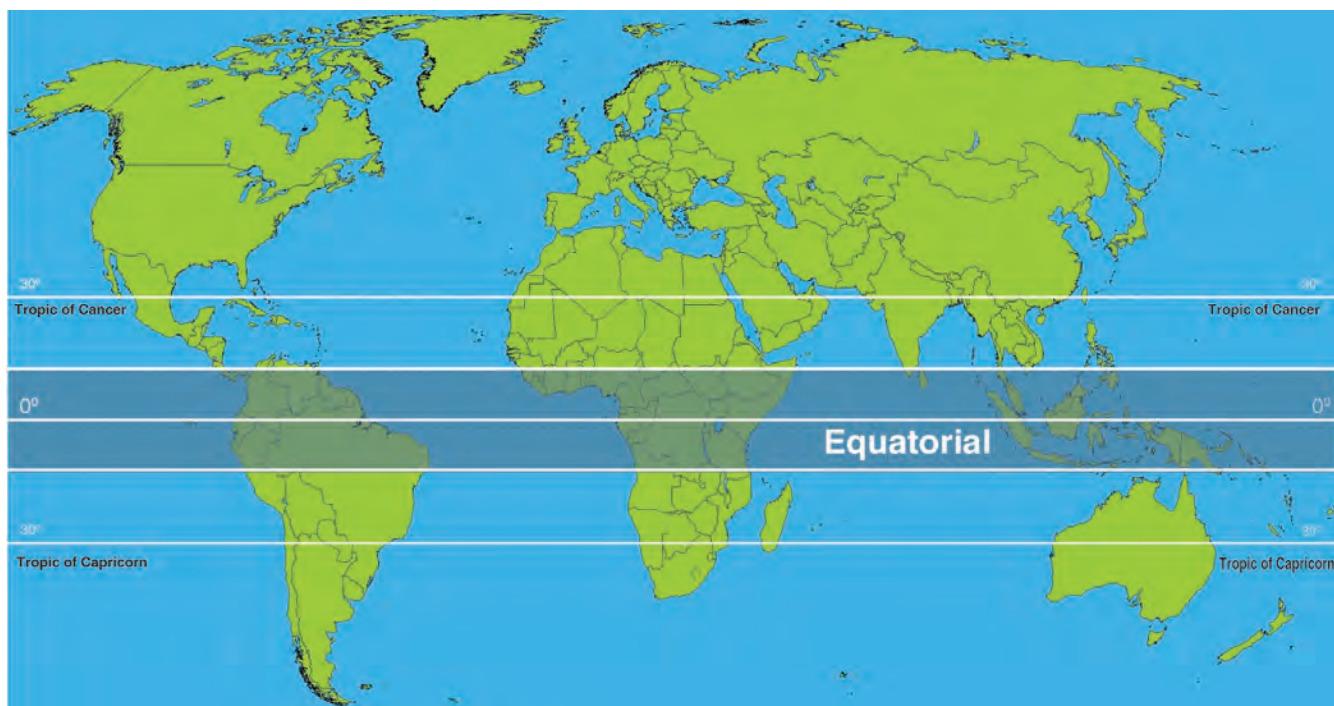
- ◆ Democratic Republic of Congo (Zaire)
- ◆ Its climate, natural vegetation and wildlife
- ◆ People and their way of living
- ◆ Industries and mineral resources
- ◆ Main cities, transport and communication system

New Words

equatorial, lightning, okapi, bonobo, complexion, pygmies, bantu

The region between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn experiences a hot and wet climate throughout the year. This climate is called the **Tropical Climate**. The sun rays fall directly upon the region. So, the climate here is very hot and rains fall with thunder every afternoon. It results in a great biodiversity in the region. The region has dense growth of bushes and trees. The forests are so thick that light and air hardly penetrate through the trees and bushes. Such forests are called **Tropical Forests** or **Equatorial Forests**.

We find these equatorial forests in a large number in Amazon River Basin of South America, the Congo River Basin of Africa and throughout much of South-East Asia.



Equatorial Region

Democratic Republic of Congo (Zaire):

Democratic Republic of Congo or DRC is located on the central side of South Africa. It is the second largest country in Africa. It is situated in the Tropical Zone. The Equator passes through the northern part of this country. It is surrounded by Congo on the west; Central African Republic and Sudan on the north; Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania on the east and Zambia and Angola towards the south. The country has a very small coastline on the west, which is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean.



Democratic Republic of Congo

Activity

Take a the map of Africa and locate neighbouring countries of DRC with the help of Atlas.

Some Facts :

DRC is surrounded by nine countries. The Democratic Republic of Congo became independent in 1960 from the rule of Belgium. At that time, it was called **Belgian Congo**. The name was changed to Zaire in 1971. In 1997 the name was again changed as **Democratic Republic of Congo**, which is its present name. Zaire was explored by Henry Morton Stanley in 1870.



River Congo is one of the most important features of the Democratic Republic of Congo which is the second longest river in Africa. It is also called as river Zaire. A major part of the Democratic Republic of Congo lies in the basin of river Zaire. The river is also known as the **Highway of Central Africa**. The sources of the Congo are in the highlands and mountains of the East African Rift as well as Lake Tanganyika and Lake Mweru. The Albert, Kivu, Edward and Tanganyika are the four major lakes of the country. The river Zaire enters the Atlantic Ocean near Matadi which is the important port of the country.



Climate: The general climate of DRC is hot and humid. The rays of the sun fall almost straight all the year. In the morning, the sun shines bright and by noon it becomes very hot.

By afternoon, the sky is covered with black clouds which follows with a heavy rainfall accompanied by thunder and lightning. DRC receives more than 200 centimetres of rainfall. The area sustains the second largest rain forest in the world (after that of the Amazon). The days and nights are almost equal in duration. There is not much difference in the summer and winter temperature.



Some Facts :

As a result of its equatorial location, the DRC experiences large amounts of precipitation and has the highest frequency of thunderstorms in the world.

Natural Vegetation: This climate helps in the growth of thick forests full of tall trees. The north part of DRC is covered with lush green forests. The region is full of **evergreen forests**.



The trees are very tall and form a canopy preventing sunlight from reaching the ground. Some trees grow upto 60 metres tall. Therefore, DRC is sometimes called the **Heart of Darkness**. The forests are full of darkness, the ground is covered with shrubs and bushes. The forests are so dense that it is not possible for human beings to pass through them. The trees are very useful as the hardwood trees like mahogany and ebony provide raw materials for many industries. Many types of grasses are also found in these forests.

Wildlife : The rain forests of DRC are famous for their wildlife. We can find there rare and endemic species such as gorilla, lions, tigers, okapi, baboon, elephant, giraffe, antelope, python, crocodile, ostrich, rhinoceros, hippopotamus and bonobo (also known as the pygmy chimpanzee).

The **okapi** is a rare species of giraffe. Congo peacocks are found only in the DRC. The forests are abode of a large variety of insects such as butterflies, ants, bees and beetles. Poisonous snakes, lizards and chameleons are also found there. The **tse-tse fly** which spreads the disease "**sleeping sickness**" also lives in these forests. A large variety of colourful birds also live in these forests. That is why these forests are often called a **gigantic zoo**.



■ **Some Facts :**

Five of the country's national parks are listed as World Heritage Sites : the Garumba, Kahuzi-Biega, Salonga and Virunga National Parks and the Okapi Wildlife Reserve.

People and their way of living : The country is not very populated. Most of the people live in villages. They belong to various tribes and most of them are Bantu-speaking Negroes. They are quite tall and hefty.

They have dark complexion. Their hairs are short and curly. They follow a traditional life style. On account of hot and humid climate, people wear limited clothes. They are fond of dance and music. A number of cities have also developed after independence. People here wear modern clothes and lead European life style.



In the Northern part of the country, the Pygmies, a primitive tribe, live in the interior of the forests. They are short with a height of only 1.5 metres. They are nomads and good hunters. They live in small huts which can protect them from heavy rainfall. They hunt animals with arrows and spears. They do not grow crops. Their food is meat, nuts, roots, fruits and berries. They are also very fond of honey.

■ **Some Facts :**

The pygmies consider the term 'pygmy' as 'degrading and insulting'. They like to be called by their individual ethnic group names such as **Twa, Baka, Aka** and **Mbuti**.



The Bantu are usually engaged in farming. The main food crops, they grow are maize, rice, millets and vegetables. Cassava, a kind of root, is their staple food. The plant is similar to the sweet potato and has edible roots. The roots are dried and ground into flour which is used to make bread. Banana, coconut, coffee, cocoa, tea, rubber, cotton, sugar cane and yam are also grown on a large scale. The main languages of DRC are French, English and Bantu. French is their official language. Other local languages are Swahili, Lingala, Ishiluba and Kikongo with many other dialects.

■ **Some Facts :**

Congo is another country which is on the west side of DRC, whose capital is Brazzaville.



About 80 percent of the population follow the religion of Christianity. Being the large religious organisation in the country with about 30 million members, the Roman Catholic church in the Democratic Republic of Congo is one of the largest Christian denomination in the continent of Africa. The National Flag of DRC is green with a yellow disc, bearing an arm holding a flaming torch.

Industries: DRC does not have many industries. There are only a few industries and most of them are in or near the cities. The most important industries are textiles, chemicals, cement, cigarettes and food processing.

Mineral Resources : DRC is very rich in mineral resources. It is the world's largest producer of cobalt ore and a major producer of copper and industrial diamonds. In South DRC, minerals like diamonds, gold, copper and manganese are found in a large scale. A large number of people are engaged in the mines. DRC has significant deposits of tantalum, which is used in the fabrication of electronic components in computers and mobile phones.



The government is trying hard to develop the resources. The country has plenty of water resources. Dams have been built across the rivers to produce hydroelectricity.

Main Cities: The major cities of DRC are Kinshasa, Matadi and Bikavu. Kinshasa is the capital and the biggest city of DRC. Its population is about 2.30 millions. It lies on the south bank of river Zaire. It has a big international airport. Matadi is the biggest sea port which has a large number of small scale industries where cigarettes, beverages, soft drinks and vegetable oil are produced. Bikavu is the most beautiful tourist attraction of DRC. It is famous for its beautiful lake Kivu. Banana is an important port located on the mouth of the river Zaire. The important export trade is carried on through this port.



Kinshasa



Matadi



Bikavu

Some Facts :

The Katanga Mine area in South DRC is one of the biggest store house of minerals.

Transport and Communication System:

Transport and communication are not well developed in DRC because the country is covered with dense forests. The terrain and climate of the Congo Basin present serious barriers to road and rail construction and the distances are enormous across this vast country. The river Zaire is navigable partly because of waterfalls and rapids at many places. Some of the famous falls of DRC are the Livingstone Falls, Inga Falls and Stanley Falls.



Stanley Falls

Think and Discuss

Why is it difficult to make smooth long roads in DRC ?

Railways have also developed in recent years. They are in the south eastern part of the country. They link mining areas with river ports. Matadi is the biggest sea port. Major cities of DRC are linked with airways and connect Kinshasa with several countries of Africa and Europe.



THINGS TO REMEMBER

1. The Democratic Republic of Congo is the second largest country in the heart of Africa.
2. Kinshasa is the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo.
3. The climate of DRC is hot and humid all the year round. It is almost same to that of Kerala in our country.
4. Major part of DRC lies in the basin of river Zaire.
5. DRC is rich in vegetation and wildlife.
6. The forests in this area always remain green. The trees are different in height but all of them form a canopy.
7. DRC is rich in minerals. It is the world's largest producer of diamond and cobalt.
8. Most of the people here belong to tribes.
9. Cassava is their staple food. Maize and rice are also grown here.
10. Agriculture and mining are the main occupations of the people.
11. French is the official language of DRC.



EXERCISE

A. Write 'T' for True and 'F' for False :

1. DRC was earlier known as Belgian Congo. ()
2. Matadi is the major lake of DRC. ()
3. DRC experiences a heavy rainfall with thunder and lightning. ()
4. The capital of DRC is Kinshasa. ()
5. DRC has smooth roadways system. ()
6. DRC is sometimes called the Heart of Darkness. ()

B. Fill in the blanks :

1. DRC is the _____ largest country in Africa.
2. Zambia is located towards the _____ of DRC.
3. The river Zaire flows into the _____ Ocean.
4. _____ is the staple food of DRC.
5. Republic of Congo is a _____ populated country.
6. The Pygmies are the _____ people of DRC.
7. DRC has a _____ and _____ climate.

C. Match the following :

- | | | |
|----------------------------|-----|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Belgian Congo and Zaire | () | (a) Language of the people of DRC |
| 2. Pygmies | () | (b) Sleeping sickness |
| 3. Kinshasa | () | (c) Main food crop |
| 4. Bantu | () | (d) Primitive tribe |
| 5. Mt Stanley | () | (e) Older names of the DRC |
| 6. Cassava | () | (f) Capital city |
| 7. Tse-Tse | () | (g) The highest peak |

D. Name the following :

1. Any two food crops of DRC _____
2. Any two famous waterfalls _____
3. Any two minerals of the DRC _____
4. Any two trees of DRC _____
5. Any two cities of DRC _____
6. Any two animals of DRC _____

E. Answer the following questions :

1. Where is the Democratic Republic of Congo located ?
2. What are the important features of the climate of DRC region ?
3. Who are the Pygmies ?
4. Which major crops are grown in DRC ?
5. Why is DRC called the Natural Zoo of the World ?
6. Who are the Bantu ?
7. Why is DRC called the Heart of darkness ?
8. What is the importance of the river Zaire ?
9. Which minerals are produced in DRC ?

Project / Activity

F. Collect the pictures of flora and fauna of the DRC region and paste them in your scrap book.



G. On an outline map of Africa, mark the following:

DRC, the countries that border DRC, River Zaire, Matadi, Atlantic Ocean and Kinshasa.

