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Democratic Republic of The Congo- Land of Dense Forests

In this lesson, we will learn about :

- ◆ Democratic Republic of the Congo – its location, climate and vegetation.
- ◆ Wildlife in Democratic Republic of the Congo, its minerals and transport system.
- ◆ Life of the people in Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Look at the shaded regions in the given world map. They are the **Equatorial** regions of the world. They lie on both sides of the Equator and have hot and wet type of climate throughout the year. Most of these areas have thick evergreen forests. Democratic Republic of the Congo in Africa is an important country

which lies in this region. It was earlier known as **Zaire**. It became independent in 1960. Its capital city is Kinshasa.

Democratic Republic of the Congo is the third largest country in Africa with an area of about 23.5 lakh square kilometres. It has Equator passing through it.



Map of the world showing Equatorial Regions

FACT FILE

Capital	: Kinshasa
Currency	: Congolese Franc
Area	: 2,344,885 sq km
Population	
2017	: 82.04 million
Large cities	: Kinshasa, Lubumbashi, Kananga
Languages	: French (official), swahili, Lingala
Literacy	: 68.8%
Life Expectancy	: 57.7 years
Date of Independence	: 30 June, 1960
Government	: Republic
Economy	: Minerals — <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Copper mines● Gold mines● Diamond mines● Cobalt● Cadmium, manganese, zinc, uranium, etc.
	Forest — Mahogany ebony, teak, etc.
	Agriculture— Casava, coffee, palm oil, banana, tobacco, rice, rubber, sugarcane, maize, etc.

Location and Land

Look at the map of Democratic Republic of the Congo. You will see that the Equator runs through its north. It is surrounded by nine countries. The names of these countries are —



Map of Democratic Republic of the Congo

- Central African Republic and Sudan in the north.
- Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania and Burundi in the east.
- Republic of the Congo in the west.
- Zambia and Angola in the south.

One of the most important features of Democratic Republic of the Congo is the river Congo which is the second longest river in Africa. The Congo river is also known as Zaire river. Can you name the longest river in Africa?

The river Congo is called the 'Highway of Central Africa'. The Albert, Kivu, Edward and Tanganyika are the major lakes of this country.



Lake Tanganyika

Climate

Due to its location near the Equator, the temperature is very high throughout the year. It has a hot and wet climate. At noon the temperature is very high and unbearable. Humidity in the air is very uncomfortable. Evenings and nights are cool and comfortable. Kerala in our country has this type of climate.

Vegetation

Hot and humid climate helps the plants to grow faster. The land is covered with extensive equatorial forests. These forests have a large variety of trees and plants in a small area. As a result, these trees compete with each other for sunlight. They are more than 40 metres in height and form a canopy of leaves at the top. These forests remain green throughout the year, so they are called **Evergreen Forests**. There is, dense growth of creepers and climbers which are full of flowers. Many important trees like rubber, coconut, bamboo and oil palms grow here. These forests have a large reserve of hardwood trees like mahogany, ebony, etc. These trees provide raw materials for many industries.



A Forest in Democratic Republic of the Congo

The forests of Democratic Republic of the Congo provide habitat to a large number of animals, birds, reptiles, insects, etc. Hippopotamuses,

gorillas, giraffes, chimpanzees, elephants, monkeys and baboons roam through the forests. These forests have reptiles like snakes and pythons in abundance. The rivers are full of alligators and crocodiles. A special mammal called the **Okapi**, with head resembling a Giraffe and body resembling a zebra is found in the forests of Congo. Thus, Democratic Republic of the Congo looks like a gigantic zoo. It is the natural zoo of the world. But unfortunately, hunting has reduced the animal life in Democratic Republic of the Congo.



Okapi



Rich wildlife in Democratic Republic of the Congo

Life of the People

Democratic Republic of the Congo has a very thin population. Though a number of tribes live here, the Bantu is the largest tribe. Bantu people are tall and have curly hair. Pygmies are a primitive tribe who live in dense forests. They are extremely short statured and live in houses made from twigs, leaves and tree branches. They live by hunting, trapping animals and gathering honey and food. Their population has reduced on account of migration.



People of Bantu tribe



Pygmies – A primitive tribe

Agriculture

The main occupation of people of Democratic Republic of the Congo is farming and mining.

The main crops grown here are cassava, maize, banana and rice. Cassava is the staple food crop. The Cassava plant has long and fleshy roots or tubers under the ground. Its tubers are used to make flour.



Cassava is the staple food of people

Cassava plant can grow to a height of one and a half metre. Cash crops like cocoa, coffee, tobacco and cotton are also grown here.

Industry

Democratic Republic of the Congo is rich in minerals like gold, diamond, cobalt, uranium, coal and manganese. Most of these minerals are exported due to lack of industries. Some industries produce consumer goods. These are located in Kinshasa and Lubumbashi.



Democratic Republic of the Congo relies on its rivers and lakes for much of its transportation

Water is an important resource here. It is used for producing hydroelectricity which makes up for shortage of fuels like coal and petroleum. Democratic Republic of the Congo has an underdeveloped transport system. Water transport is important. Matadi is the chief seaport and Kinshasa is an important river port. Roads and railways are also there but

they are not well maintained. People prefer to travel by air.

Democratic Republic of the Congo is now improving day by day. The people have adopted new lifestyles. The money earned by exports of minerals is used for the development of the country.



KEY WORDS

- Equatorial region** — Region lying near equator, both north and south of it.
- Evergreen forests** — Forests containing trees which remain green throughout the year.
- Vegetation** — Natural forests.
- Primitive tribes** — Original inhabitants of a region.



THINGS I HAVE LEARNT

1. Democratic Republic of the Congo is located in the Equatorial region.
2. It has hot and humid climate throughout the year.
3. River Congo flows through Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is also called the Zaire river.
4. The land is covered with very thick forests.
5. It has a large number of animals, birds, reptiles, insects, etc.
6. Democratic Republic of the Congo is very thinly populated.
7. The main occupation of people of Democratic Republic of the Congo is farming and mining.
8. Democratic Republic of the Congo has a poor transport system.



A. Tick (✓) the correct answers.

1. Which important line of latitude passes through Democratic Republic of the Congo?
(a) Equator (b) Tropic of Cancer (c) Tropic of Capricorn
2. Which is the characteristic vegetation of Democratic Republic of the Congo?
(a) Evergreen (b) Coniferous (c) Deciduous
3. Choose the incorrect statement.
(a) River Congo is an important feature of Democratic Republic of the Congo
(b) Congo, also called Zaire, is the longest river in Africa.
(c) River Congo is called the 'Highway of Central Africa'.
4. The climate of Democratic Republic of the Congo is
(a) Hot and humid (b) Cold and wet (c) Hot, wet and humid
5. Which is an important seaport of the country?
(a) Kinshasa (b) Matadi (c) Lubumbashi

B. Match the following.

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Cassava | (a) Main Occupation |
| 2. Farming and mining | (b) Largest Tribe |
| 3. Bantu | (c) Short statured |
| 4. Pygmies | (d) Staple food crop |
| 5. Kinshasa | (e) Capital |

C. Fill in the blanks. Choose words from the box.

Kivu Bantus Matadi Albert thin Edward third
Kinshasa Tanganyika tropical

1. Equatorial regions are also called _____ regions.
2. The capital of Democratic Republic of the Congo is _____.
3. Democratic Republic of the Congo is the _____ largest country in Africa.
4. The four major lakes of Democratic Republic of the Congo are _____, _____, _____ and _____.

5. Democratic Republic of the Congo has a _____ population.
6. _____ are tall and have curly hair.
7. _____ is the chief seaport of Democratic Republic of the Congo.

D. Write T for the true and F for the false statements.

1. Democratic Republic of the Congo became independent in 1965.
2. It has Equator passing through it.
3. The Congo river is also called Zaire river.
4. Kerala in our country has same climate as Democratic Republic of the Congo.
5. There are no trees in Democratic Republic of the Congo.
6. Forests provide raw materials for many industries.
7. Democratic Republic of the Congo is thickly populated.
8. People of Democratic Republic of the Congo live by hunting, trapping animals and gathering honey and food.

E. Answer these questions.

1. What is an Equatorial region?
2. Name the neighbouring countries of Democratic Republic of the Congo?
3. What is the importance of the Zaire river?
4. Describe the climate of Democratic Republic of the Congo.
5. Why are the forests in Democratic Republic of the Congo called 'Evergreen Forests'?
6. Why is Democratic Republic of the Congo called the 'natural zoo of the world'?
[VALUE BASED QUESTION]
7. Describe the lifestyle of the Pygmies.
8. What is Cassava? Explain.
9. Why is water an important resource in Democratic Republic of the Congo?
10. What type of transport system does Democratic Republic of the Congo have?
11. The climate and vegetation of which state of India is almost similar to those of Democratic Republic of the Congo? How?
[HOTS]



MAP WORK

F. On the outline map of Democratic Republic of the Congo, mark and label the following:

1. Zaire river
2. Equator
3. Kinshasa
4. Lakes on eastern side
5. Matadi



DO AND LEARN

G. The wildlife of Democratic Republic of the Congo is interesting, intimidating, amazing and colourful. It is called the “natural zoo of the world”.

Make a project on the wildlife of Democratic Republic of the Congo.



SURF AND LEARN

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/democratic_republic_of_Congo

<http://www.congo-pages.org/qutart/congoquiz.htm>



LIFE SKILLS

SOCIAL & THINKING

Imagine you are a member of a Pygmy tribal family living in the dense forests of the Congo. Describe your lifestyle.