



# The Land of Dense Forests

## Get Set!

These countries lie in the equatorial region. Rearrange the letters to get their names. Write them on the blanks.

1. ENKYA

Kenya

3. LAMSAYIA

\_\_\_\_\_

5. ECAUROD

\_\_\_\_\_

2. MECAORON

\_\_\_\_\_

4. ISR ANKAL

\_\_\_\_\_

6. MANAPA

\_\_\_\_\_

Name the continents where these countries lie.

The region between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn

is the equatorial region. This region has a hot and wet climate. The Democratic



Map 6.1 Equatorial forests of the world

Republic of the Congo lies in this region. See Map 6.1.

## THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (DRC)

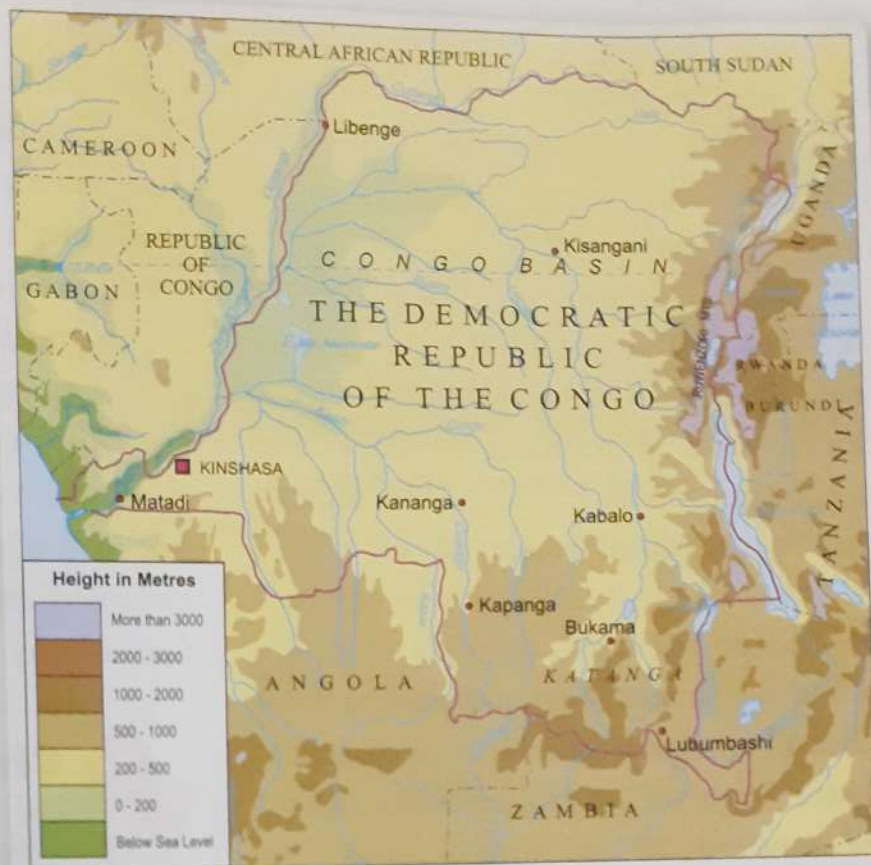
The DRC is the second-largest country in Africa, after Algeria. It has an area of about 23.5 lakh square kilometres. The Equator passes through the northern part of the country.

### Location

The country is located in Central Africa. It is surrounded by nine countries. See Map 6.2 and name these countries.

### Land

River Congo, the second-longest river in Africa, flows through the country. This river is known as the **Highway of Central Africa**. The country lies in the centre of the river basin, which is a vast



Map 6.2 The Democratic Republic of the Congo and its neighbouring countries

low-lying area, covered with rainforests. It is surrounded by mountains and plateaus. Towards the north-east lie the Ruwenzori mountains. Mount Margherita is the highest peak in this range. The country has four major lakes – Albert, Edward, Kivu and Tanganyika. These lakes lie along the eastern boundary of the country.



### FactWise

River Congo originates in the highlands of east Africa and flows into the Atlantic Ocean. The famous Inga Falls are in the lower course of the river.

River Congo flows through the tropical rainforests of the country.

### Climate

The country has an **equatorial** climate. It is very hot and rainy throughout the year. Humidity is high, which makes it uncomfortable at times.

Mornings are generally pleasant. At noon, the temperature is very high and the heat is unbearable. Gradually, clouds build up, resulting in heavy rain in the afternoons. Evenings and nights are cool and comfortable.

### Vegetation

In hot and humid regions, trees and other plants grow quickly. The forests have a large variety of trees. Most of the trees are tall and form a dense **canopy** at the top. Even sunlight cannot pass through it. These forests remain green throughout the year and are called **evergreen forests**. These forests are so dense that it is difficult to pass through them.

### Wildlife

The forests are rich in wildlife. Gorillas, chimpanzees, monkeys, bonobos and baboons are found here. Marshy lands are home to the hippopotamus, rhinoceros and the elephant. The rivers and lakes are full of crocodiles, alligators and fish. Okapis and antelopes are found in the forests of Ituri. Lions, cheetahs, hyenas, giraffes and buffaloes live in the grasslands. Pelicans, ducks, owls and eagles are some of the birds found here.



### Checkpoint

Circle the names of the countries that share boundaries with the DRC.

Algeria	Tanzania	South Sudan
Zambia	Kenya	Angola
Uganda	South Africa	Ethiopia
Rwanda	Chad	Egypt

The rich wildlife of the Democratic Republic of the Congo



### Economic resources

Farming is the main occupation. Forestry, fishing and livestock rearing are other occupations. Large areas under forests have been cleared for farming. The main food crops cultivated are rice, maize and cassava.

Farmers also grow many cash crops such as cocoa, coffee, tobacco, cotton, rubber and oil palm. Some cash crops are exported to other countries. The methods of farming are traditional and primitive.

The country is rich in minerals. The minerals found here are gold, cobalt, copper, cadmium, petroleum, diamond, silver, zinc, manganese, tin, uranium, iron ore, bauxite and coal. Most minerals are exported. Industries are not well developed. Most industries are based on agricultural raw materials. Some products such as shoes and textiles are manufactured in the cities.

### Life of the people

The country is thinly populated. Most people live in scattered villages. Some people have migrated to towns to work in mines and factories.

Cassava, a root crop, is the staple food of the people. It is dried and pounded into flour. This flour is used to make bread. Fish is an important part of their diet.



Farming is done manually in the DRC.

The Bantu peoples constitute a majority of the population. They are tall and have curly hair. They speak languages belonging to the large Bantu language group. These people follow traditional lifestyles. They enjoy music and dance. On special occasions, they wear colourful dresses.

Pygmies are the original inhabitants of the country. They are known as the Bambuti (Mbuti). They are very short, less than 150 cm tall. The Europeans who ruled the country in the past had driven the Pygmies into the forests, where they lived by hunting and gathering food. The few Pygmies who still remain, live mostly in the Ituri forest in the north-east. They live in huts and move about in search of food. They still lead a primitive life.

Bambuti children





River Congo flows through Kinshasa.

## Transport

The country has a poor land transport system. The dense forests of the country have made it difficult to build railways and roads. Only some parts of the country have roads and railways. But these are not maintained properly.

The country has a network of rivers. Thus, water transport has become the chief means of travel. Air transport is a very effective way to travel in this vast country. The country has more than 200 airports. This means of transport is fast becoming popular.

## Cities

About 30 per cent of the total population lives in towns and cities. **Kinshasa** is the capital and the largest city. It is also an important commercial and industrial centre. Lubumbashi is the main city in the mineral-rich region. Other big cities are Kananga, Kisangani, Likasi and Kikwit. Matadi is a port city.

The country is now developing fast. Money earned from exports is being used to improve the infrastructure and to provide facilities to the people.

## Words to know

canopy

forestry

infrastructure

a mass of leaves and branches that spread over an area to form a roof  
the practice of planting trees and taking care of forests  
the basic facilities and services that people need, for example schools, markets and hospitals