

Congo to Auction Land to Oil Companies

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In news— Recently, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has announced that it will auction oil and gas permits in critically endangered gorilla habitat and the world's largest tropical peatlands.

About Democratic Republic of Congo-

- The Democratic Republic of the Congo is **a country in Central Africa.**
- **It is located in sub-Saharan Africa, bordered to the northwest by the Republic of the Congo,** to the north by the Central African Republic, to the northeast by South Sudan, to the east by Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi, and by Tanzania (across Lake Tanganyika), to the south and southeast by Zambia, to the southwest by Angola, and to the west by the South Atlantic Ocean and the Cabinda exclave of Angola.



- It **straddles the Equator,** with one-third to the north and two-thirds to the south.
- It is the **second largest country on the continent next**

to Algeria.

- The **capital, Kinshasa, is located on the Congo River.**
- It is the largest city in central Africa and serves as the country's official administrative, economic, and cultural centre.
- **The country is often referred to by its acronym, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), or called Congo (Kinshasa),** to distinguish it from the other Congo republic, which is officially called the Republic of the Congo and is often referred to as Congo (Brazzaville).
- **Congo gained independence from Belgium in 1960.**
- From 1971 to 1997 the country was **officially the Republic of Zaire, a change made by then ruler Gen.**
- **"Zaire" is a variation of a term meaning "great river" in local African languages.**
- Following the overthrow of Mobutu in 1997, the country's name prior to **1971, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was reinstated.**
- **French is the official language** and the language of instruction, business, administration, and international communications.
- DRC is the **most populous officially Francophone country (French-speaking) in the world.**
- More than 200 African ethnic groups live in Congo; of these, **Bantu peoples constitute a large majority** of the country's population.
- The **Pygmies**, having arrived possibly during the Upper Paleolithic Period, are thought to have been the **earliest inhabitants of the Congo basin.**
- **Communication between groups has been facilitated by four "national" languages:** Swahili, Tshiluba (Kiluba), Lingala, and Kongo.
- It is to be noted here that many of the tropical diseases including **Ebola virus have originated from this region.**
- It is a member of the United Nations, Non-Aligned Movement, African Union, East African Community, COMESA,

Southern African Development Community, and the Economic Community of Central African States.

Geography & Environment of DRC-

- As a result of its equatorial location, the **DRC experiences high precipitation and has the highest frequency of thunderstorms in the world.**
- It has the **Congo rainforest, the second-largest rainforest in the world** after the Amazon rainforest.
- This area is surrounded by plateaus merging into savannas in the south and southwest, by mountainous terraces in the west, and dense grasslands extending beyond the Congo River in the north.
- The **glaciated Rwenzori Mountains** are found in the extreme eastern region.
- The tropical climate produced the Congo River system which dominates the region topographically along with the rainforest it flows through.
- **The Congo Basin occupies nearly the entire country** and an area of nearly 1,000,000 km²
- Major **tributaries of Congo** include the Kasai, Sangha, Ubangi, Ruzizi, Aruwimi, and Lulonga.
- **The Congo River has the second-largest flow and the second-largest watershed of any river in the world** (trailing the Amazon in both respects).
- **The sources of the Congo River are in the Albertine Rift Mountains** that flank the western branch of the East African Rift, as well as Lake Tanganyika and Lake Mweru.
- Tectonic movement results in **volcanic activity**, occasionally with loss of life.
- The geologic activity in this area also created the **African Great Lakes**, four of which lie on the Congo's eastern frontier: **Lake Albert, Lake Kivu, Lake Edward, and Lake Tanganyika.**
- The rift valley has exposed an enormous amount of **mineral wealth** throughout the south and east of the

Congo, making it accessible to mining.

- Cobalt, copper, cadmium, industrial and gem-quality diamonds, gold, silver, zinc, manganese, tin, germanium, uranium, radium, bauxite, iron ore, and coal are all found in plentiful supply, especially in the **Congo's southeastern Katanga region.**
- **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.
- The Democratic Republic of the Congo is one of 17 Megadiverse countries and is the most biodiverse African country.
- **The Congo is inhabited by several great ape species:** the Common Chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*), the Bonobo (*Pan paniscus*), the eastern gorilla (*Gorilla beringei*), and possibly the western gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla*).