



Africa

To the west of India lies a large continent. On this continent, there are extensive deserts, dense forests, long and broad rivers, numerous large lakes and grasslands stretching over thousands of miles. There are certain wild animals which we do not find in our country. The world's largest gold and diamond mines are located here. The name of this continent is Africa. Perhaps, you will be surprised to know that Africa is the cradle of the humankind. Human beings first evolved in Africa and then moved to other continents.



Fig 6.1 Equatorial forest in Uganda



Fig 6.2 Savanna in Kenya



Fig 6.3 The city of Cairo by the River Nile

- ◆ Look for Africa on the world map and name the oceans that surround it. Which are its neighbouring continents?

Africa - A Vast Plateau

Look at the physical map of Africa. Do you see any large plains in the interior of the continent? Only on the coast do we find a narrow plain? The rest of the continent is a vast plateau of varying height. Look for the valleys of the Nile and the Congo. There are also several mountains on this plateau. The highest peak in Africa is Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania.

Look at Map 1 and answer the following questions:

- ◆ What is the average height of the narrow coastal plains?
- ◆ What is the height of a major portion of the plateau?
- ◆ The height of the high plateaus in the south and east of Africa is
- ◆ In the north are the Mountains.

There are long and narrow valleys in the high plateaus. There are several large lakes in these valleys.

- ◆ Identify two lakes in Africa other than Lake Victoria and write down their names.
- ◆ Locate the following rivers on a map of Africa. Use map 6 to locate the countries of Africa. Which countries do the following rivers flow through, and which oceans do they empty themselves into?

River	Country	Ocean
Nile		
Niger		
Congo		
Zambezi		

Map 1: Relief map of Africa



There is a region in the north where no rivers are to be seen. This is the Sahara Desert which receives very scanty rainfall. There is only one river, Nile, which crosses the Sahara Desert.

Look for some of the large lakes on the plateau. Lake Victoria is the largest lake in Africa. It is one of the largest fresh water lakes in the world. The Nile originates from this lake.

The region where Nile has its source receives such heavy rainfall that there is enough water to flow across the desert into the Mediterranean Sea. The Nile also flows through Egypt. Most of Egypt is a desert.

The Nile has helped civilization to develop in this desert. Egyptian civilization is several thousand years old. The waters of the Nile have helped to irrigate the fields of Egypt for thousands of years (look at Map 3).

Map 2: Africa - Out line



Climate

If you look at Africa on the globe you will find that the Equator passes through its middle. Thus, Africa is divided into northern and southern parts.

- ◆ Try to recognise the Tropic of Cancer on the wall map of Africa and label Map 2. To the south of the Equator is the Tropic of Capricorn. Locate it and write its name in the correct place on the map.
- ◆ Does the Equator pass through the middle of any other continent?

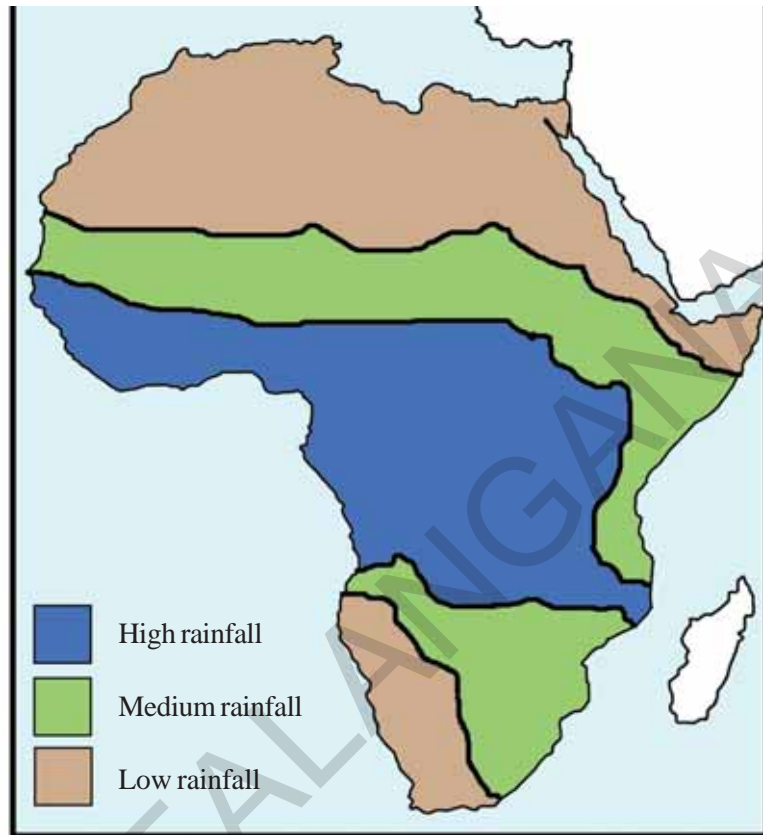
The zone between the Tropic of Cancer and Tropic of Capricorn is the hottest region of the world. There is hardly any winter here. This is also known as the Tropical region.

- ◆ Locate this zone on the map of Africa, colour it and label it as the 'Tropical Region'. Colour the zone north of the Tropic of Cancer and south of the Tropic of Capricorn in different colours.

These zones – south and north of the tropics experience summer as well as winter. They are called '*Temperate Regions*'.

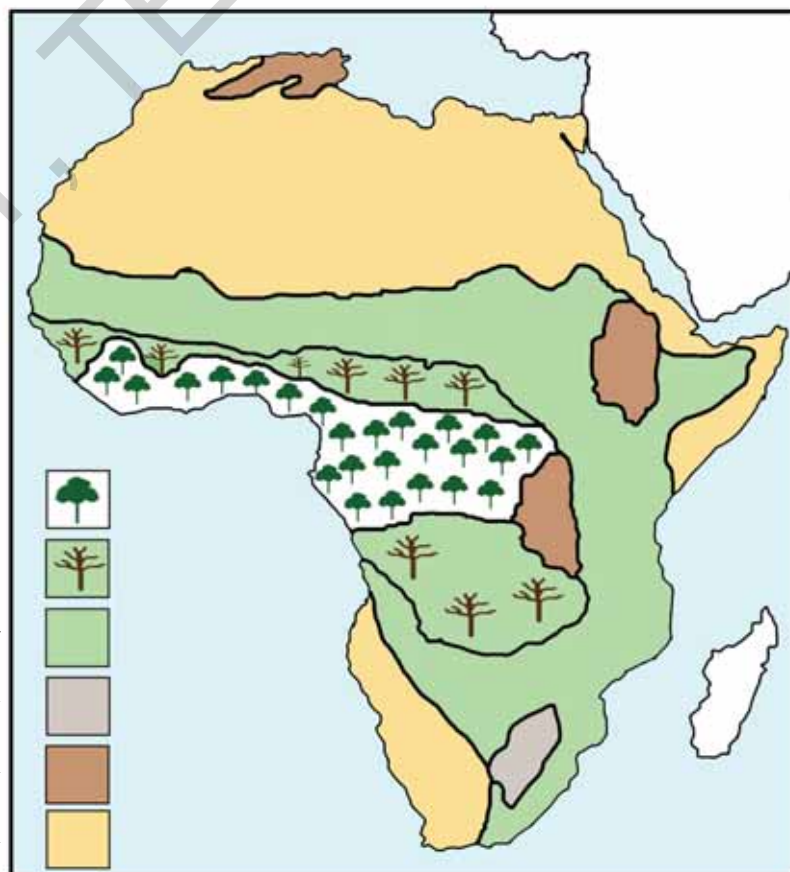
So far we have been talking only about summer and winter. However, regions that are hot but receive heavy rainfall have a different climate from hot regions that get scanty rainfall.

Map 3: Distribution of Rainfall in Africa



Map 4: Natural Vegetation in Africa

- Equatorial forests
- Broad leaved trees and grass
- Savanna
- Soft grass of high plateau
- Mountainous vegetation
- Desert vegetation



Regions with Heavy Rainfall

A large part of Africa, on both sides of the Equator, receives heavy rainfall. Look at the regions with heavy rainfall on Map 3. They are in Central and Western Africa. They have dense forests due to heavy rainfall and warm climate.

Regions with Moderate and Scanty Rainfall

Look for regions with moderate rainfall in Map 3. It surrounds the zone of heavy rainfall. In the region with moderate rainfall, it rains only in the summer, whereas it rains throughout the year in the equatorial regions.

As in our country, dry and wet seasons are distinct in the zones of moderate rainfall in Africa. Due to moderate rainfall, tall grasses grow in this region. In some places, these grasses are so tall that even elephants can hide in them! Some trees also grow between the grasses. This region is known as the 'Savanna'. Look at this region in Map 4. Different kinds of wild animals inhabit this region. You will read about them later.

A very large part of Africa is extremely arid (dry), where the rainfall is scanty or there is no rainfall at all for several years.

- ◆ Locate these arid zones in Map 3.

Almost half of the northern part of Africa is an arid region and is called the Sahara desert. Thorny bushes and short grasses grow in some parts of this desert. In other parts, there are large stretches of sand, bare hills and rocks, stones and pebbles. In the south, there is another arid region called the Kalahari Desert.

Study Map 2 and 4 and answer:

- ◆ Zones of heavy rainfall have vegetation.
- ◆ Zones of moderate rainfall have vegetation.
- ◆ Zones of scanty rainfall have vegetation.

Pictures of different areas of Africa have been shown in the beginning of the chapter. Somewhere, there are dense forests, in another area, trees and grass grow together, elsewhere there are grasses and shrubs, and in still other areas, there is no vegetation at all.

The People of Africa

People with different languages, lifestyles and habits live in different regions of Africa. Since ancient times, people have lived in small tribes, carrying out hunting gathering, animal husbandry and agriculture. Hunters have inhabited the equatorial regions and the deserts. Pastoralists inhabited the high plateaus and Savanna, grazing their animals on the extensive grasslands. Agriculture has long been carried out on river banks as well as on the margins of forests. There are several cities on the coasts where traders from distant countries come to trade.



Fig 6.4
Boabab tree

Africa, Europe and Asia

For a long time, people from other continents were largely ignorant about Africa. Europeans were familiar only with the northern coastal regions of Africa while the Indian and Arab traders knew about the eastern coast.

- ◆ Look at the world map and guess how Europeans would have reached the northern coastal areas. How can one reach Africa from Europe? Which sea has to be crossed to reach Africa?

Apart from these coastal areas, neither the Europeans nor the Indian or Arab traders had much knowledge about the interior parts of Africa.

About 500 years ago, Europeans began their attempts to reach India by the sea route by going around Africa. Traversing the Atlantic Ocean, they used to stopover on the islands of St. Madiera and Azores. They were apprehensive about going south of these islands. They thought it would be so hot further south that the sea would be boiling. Then, in 1498, a Portugese sailor named Vasco da Gama went around the southern tip of Africa and reached India.



Fig 6.5 Cape of Good Hope in South Africa

Look at the map to answer these questions:

- ◆ How can one reach India from Africa? Which ocean has to be crossed?
- ◆ Are Asia and Africa connected by land?

The African Coast

While studying Europe, you must have noticed its broken coastline. You have read about the gulfs and bays of Europe. Try to recall how these helped the Europeans in their ocean travel.

- ◆ Now look at the African coast. Do you see a broken coast or a smooth coastline?
- ◆ Do you find many bays and gulfs here, as in Europe? Name a bay and a gulf near Africa from Map 6.

Initially, when Europeans tried to go inland, many African tribes came in direct conflict with them. Europeans indulged in unfair trade, tried to enslave the African people and sold them abroad. They wanted to establish their rule over Africa and exploit its resources. Hence, the African people resisted the efforts of foreigners to establish themselves in their land.

Slave Trade

In the 16th century, many Europeans began migrating to America and started cultivation there. There was plenty of land in America, but not enough people to work on the fields. To fill the gap, the slave trade from Africa began.

Africans were captured and enslaved mainly from the coastal areas of Guinea as well as eastern Africa. The captured people were brought to the coast and sold to the Europeans. In exchange for the slaves, the African tribal leaders accepted guns, iron objects, liquor and clothes.



Fig 6.6 A Slave

The slaves were greatly oppressed. Many of them died by the time they reached the ports. The ships were stuffed with slaves. There were no proper arrangements for food or medicine. In those days, it took

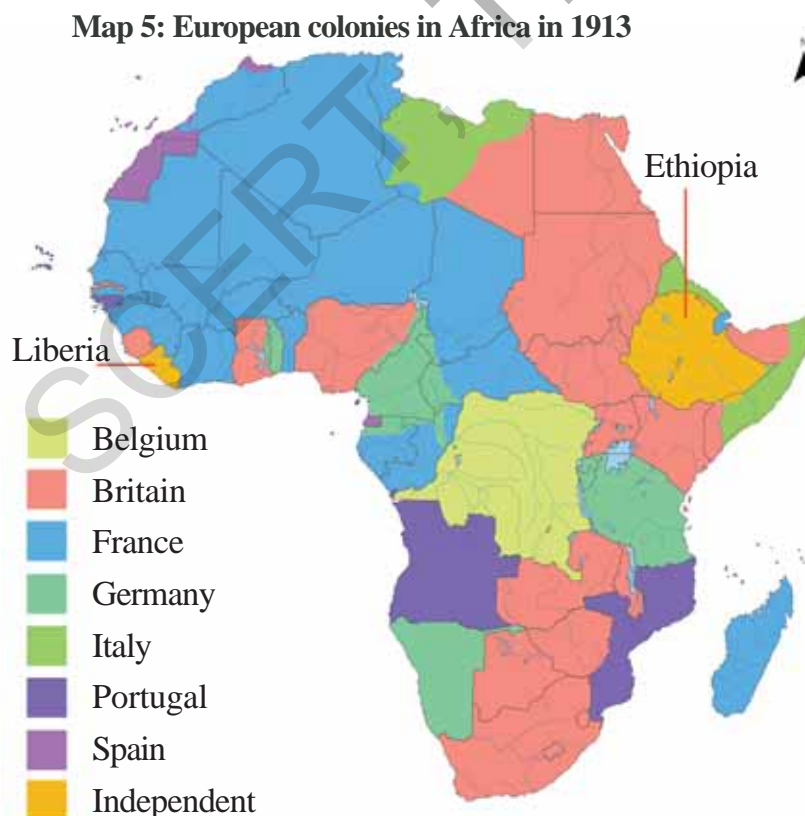
several days to reach America. Many slaves did not survive the journey due to illness and malnutrition.

Even in America, inhuman treatment was meted out to them. Despite working hard, they were not given proper food or living quarters. In this manner, millions of Africans were enslaved and taken to North and South America and the nearby islands. Lakhs of people died after they were made slaves. In the 16th and 17th centuries, numerous companies were engaged in slave trade. Eventually, the slave trade ended in the 19th century and the slaves were declared free citizens in America in 1860.

European Colonies

Earlier, you had read that Europeans had reached India by going around Africa. Subsequently, these Europeans started halting at African ports. Slowly the

Portuguese, Dutch, English, French and Germans gained a foothold in the interior and colonized these areas. The political map of Africa at the close of the 19th century is given in Map 5. The regions colonized by the European colonies have been indicated on this map.



- ◆ Can you locate the countries that colonised Africa on a map of Europe?
- ◆ Which European countries colonized Sudan and Zaire?

- ◆ Can you point out any area of Africa which was not colonised?

Along with attempts to build their colonies in Africa, the Europeans continued to explore the interiors of the continent. They travelled to the source of the Nile in the north. In the west, they explored the entire valley of the Niger and in the south, they moved northwards from Cape Town. They explored the region around the river Zambezi.

The Europeans exported African timber, minerals etc. on a very large scale to Europe. In fact, the gold and diamond mines in southern Africa are still under the control of European companies. Zambia and Zimbabwe have priceless mines of copper. This mineral has long been an important export item.

The Europeans did not stop with exporting the resources of Africa. They established plantations to grow tea, coffee, rubber, tobacco etc. These products were also exported to Europe.

Plantations in Nigeria

You may be fond of eating chocolates. They are made of cocoa, which grows in Nigeria. In southern Nigeria, apart from cocoa, there are also rubber plantations. Oil-bearing palm trees are also found there. Oil is extracted from its fruit. People reach these forests after crossing the Niger by boat to collect palm fruit. Earlier, all these trees were found in wild forests. When the demand for them increased, patches of forest were cleared and these trees were planted there. Cocoa, rubber, palm and palm oil are being exported and this enables Nigeria to earn foreign exchange.

- ◆ Locate the areas where these crops grown on the map of Nigeria (as per map 4).

Plantations were started by the British who were not satisfied with the quantity of wild products collected from the forests. They wanted to produce more and export them.

Plantations made many things easy for them. First of all, it was no longer difficult to go into the forest and locate the trees. It was easy to look after the trees since they were all in one place. Harvesting the produce became much easier. Therefore, the production increased. Nigerian people started working in these plantations, while the British were their managers. In this way, commercial agriculture of palm, cocoa and rubber began in Nigeria.

Not only this, a number of processing units were also set up near plantations, such as units to separate seed from the cocoa fruit, to dry it, extract oil from palm fruit, extract milk from rubber plants and so on.

Most of the profit from trade of palm, cocoa and rubber went to the British. The Nigerian people worked there only as agricultural labourers. Even in India, during the British times, plantations of tea and coffee were started for trade purposes. Nigeria was under the British rule until 1960 when it won independence. After that, the plantations and trade in plantation products have gradually come under the control of the Nigerians and they are able to benefit from these.

Independent Africa

During the last century, African countries gained independence from the control of European powers. New nations came up with their own governments. Of course, many Europeans are still settled in African countries. But slowly, the African people are acquiring control over their land, forests, mines, and agricultural production and benefiting from them.

Minerals of Africa

The continent is very rich in minerals like coal, copper, tin etc. Besides, it is perhaps the largest producer in the world of precious minerals like gold and diamonds. One of the main aims of Europeans in Africa was to exploit these resources by using servile labour of the Africans. Many of these countries and their companies control most of the mineral resources of even the independent African countries till date.

For example, mineral oil or petroleum is the most important natural resource of Nigeria. The Dutch companies established control over the oil mining and refining in

Nigeria. Since 1958, mineral oil has been exported from Nigeria. Oil refineries have been set up at Harcourt and Vari port.

This industry is mostly in the hands of foreign companies to this day. The Nigerian government has only a small share in this industry. This is the same with many other minerals mined from Africa.

The foreign companies do bring in new technologies and investments into the mining and processing industries, thus creating employment for the local people. However, they use cheap labour to make huge profits which are taken away from the African people. Most of these companies are also careless about environmental protection and have caused immense damage to the natural environment. This has affected the quality of land and life of the people adversely.

- ♦ Familiarise yourself with the countries of Africa, by colouring and labelling - Map -7.

Keywords :

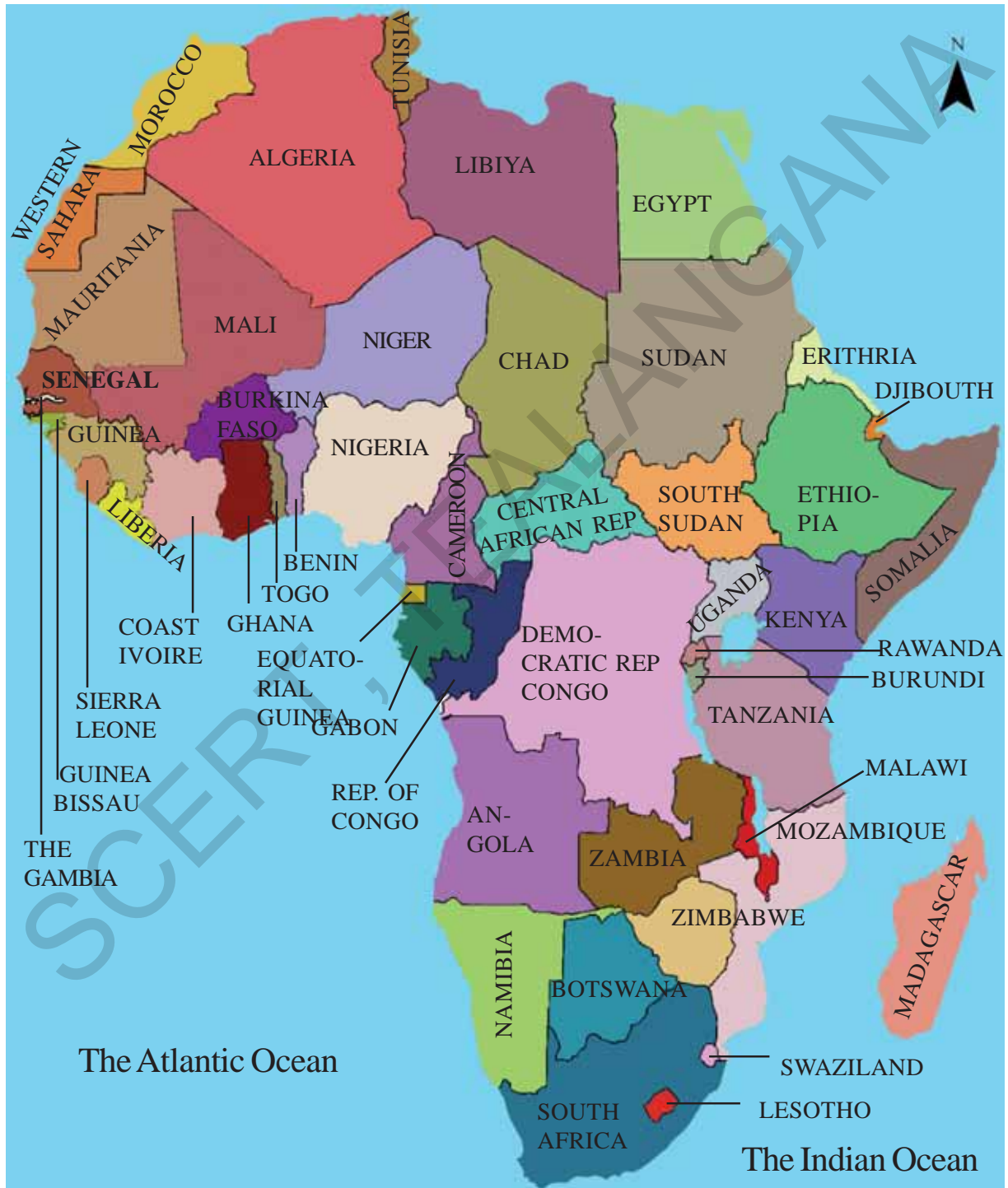
1. Colonies
2. Slave
3. Plateau

Improve your learning

1. From Europe, which sea does one have to cross to reach northern Africa?
2. State three difficulties that the Europeans faced in reaching the interior parts of Africa.
3. Name the two large deserts of Africa.
4. Two political maps of Africa have been given in the chapter. Compare the two to find out which European country controlled the present day countries of Nigeria and Zimbabwe.
5. Name two countries of Africa where equatorial forests are found.
6. What goods did Europeans trade with Africa? What kind of agricultural produce did they promote for trade purpose?
7. Who benefited from the slave trade? Why did America need slaves?
8. How can you say that the slave trade is highly heinous?
9. Read the last para of this lesson and comment on it.



Map 6: Countries of Africa



First, label this map with the help of Map 6. Then colour all the countries with different colours. Take care not to colour two neighbouring countries with the same colour.

Map 7: Countries of Africa

