

Geographical Identity of Sri Lanka

02

Territorial land

Map 2.1 shows the location of Sri Lanka in the Southern part of the Asian continent in close proximity to India. It is an island in the Indian Ocean having a central location in relation to other countries in the region.



Map 2.1 : Location of Sri Lanka
(Source: Sarasavi School Atlas - 2004)

The island, Sri Lanka is separated from India by the narrow Palk Strait about 32 kilometres wide. Continents such as Africa, Asia and Australia are located around the country bordering the Indian Ocean (Map 2.1).



Activity

Mark and name continents of Asia and Africa, Indian Peninsula, Indian Ocean, Sri Lanka, Bay of Bengal, Arabian Sea and Palk Strait on an outline map of the world.

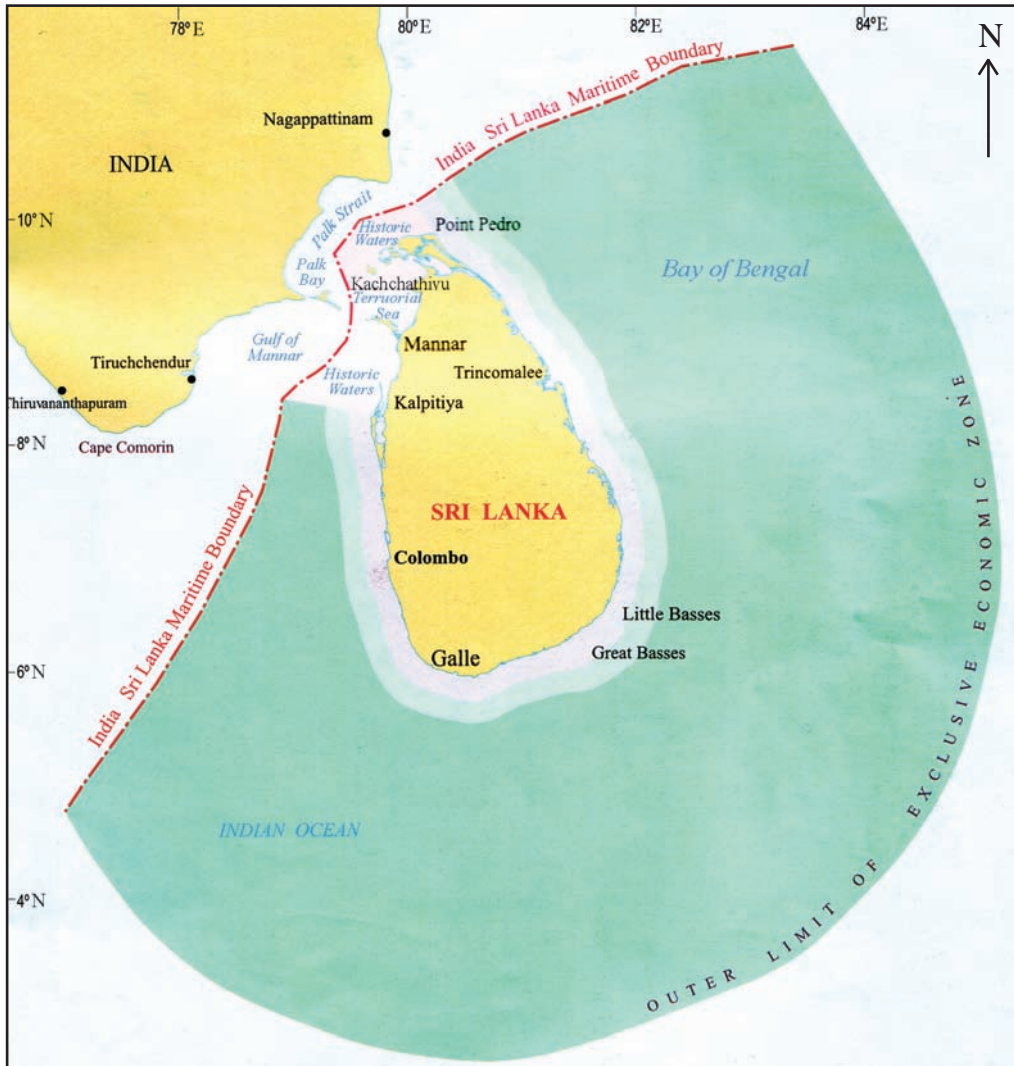
Sri Lanka is located centrally in the Indian Ocean, South of the continent of Asia as an island surrounded by many countries, continents and other islands.

Territorial Area

Think about your home or school. They have their own boundaries. It is same as your village or town. Similarly Sri Lanka, as an independent country, has its own boundaries. Although the coast line is the clearly visible boundary of Sri Lanka, its territorial boundary extends beyond this limit including a part of the Indian Ocean surrounding the country (Map 2.2).

There were disputes and conflicts among nations regarding the territorial boundaries. In order to solve the territorial boundary disputes an International Convention of the Sea was adopted to which Sri Lanka placed the signature on 10th of December 1982. However this convention came into effect worldwide only from 16th of November 1994. According to this convention the territorial limit of a country bordering the sea extends 12 nautical miles from the coast line of that country. As one nautical mile is equal to 1852 m, the territorial boundary of Sri Lanka extends 22,224 m (12 nautical miles or about 22 km) into the sea from the coastline, except in the North and Northeast where a narrow sea strip is shared by India and Sri Lanka (Map 2.2).

Any country has a legal right to the air space, sea bed and all accompanying resources within its territorial limits. There are islands, coral reefs, rocks and shallow beds of sea grasses within Sri Lanka's territorial limits. The shallow continental shelf that covers most of this zone is abundant in sea food, a factor which supports a successful fishing industry. Similarly, bays and lagoons along the coastline as well as coral reefs and other beautiful sea resources have attracted many tourists.



Map 2.2: Territorial boundary of Sri Lanka.
Source: Sarasavi Atlas - 2004



Activity

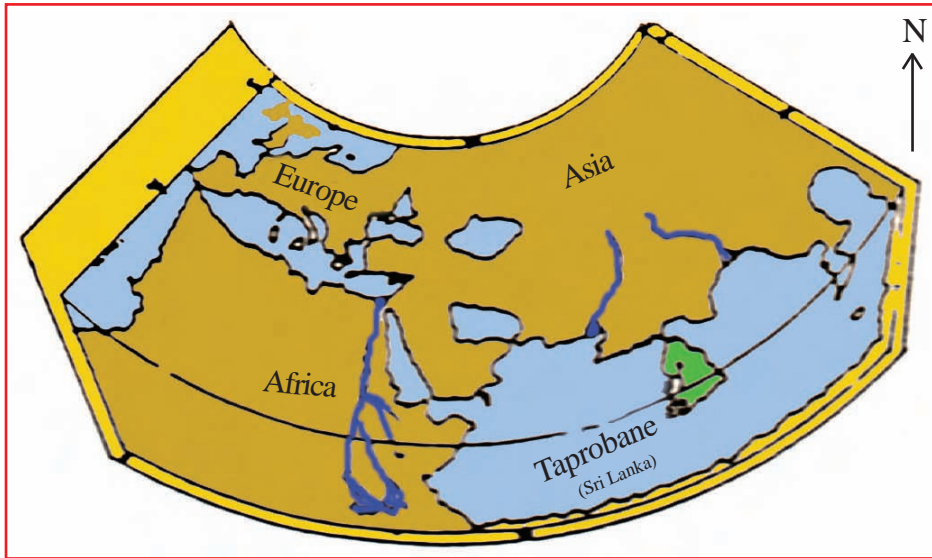
Mark the territorial boundary of Sri Lanka in an outline map and shade the territorial sea in blue and the land in yellow.

Sri Lanka is situated in the Indian Ocean South to the sub-continent India. The geographical location of Sri Lanka is in between $5^{\circ}55'$ to $9^{\circ}51'$ North latitude and between $79^{\circ}42'$ to $81^{\circ}52'$ East longitude. Island of Sri Lanka is having a land area of about 65610 sq. km and its full length from Point Pedro in the North to Dondra Head in the Southern coast is about 432 km. Its full breadth from Colombo in the Western coast to Sangaman Kanda point in the Eastern coast is about 224km.



Activities

1. In an outline map of Sri Lanka, mark and name Point Pedro, Dondra Head, Colombo and Sangaman Kanda point.
2. Draw two lines connecting North to South points and East to West points.
3. Indicate the length and breadth of Sri Lanka in km on these lines.



Map. 2.3 World map by Ptolemy

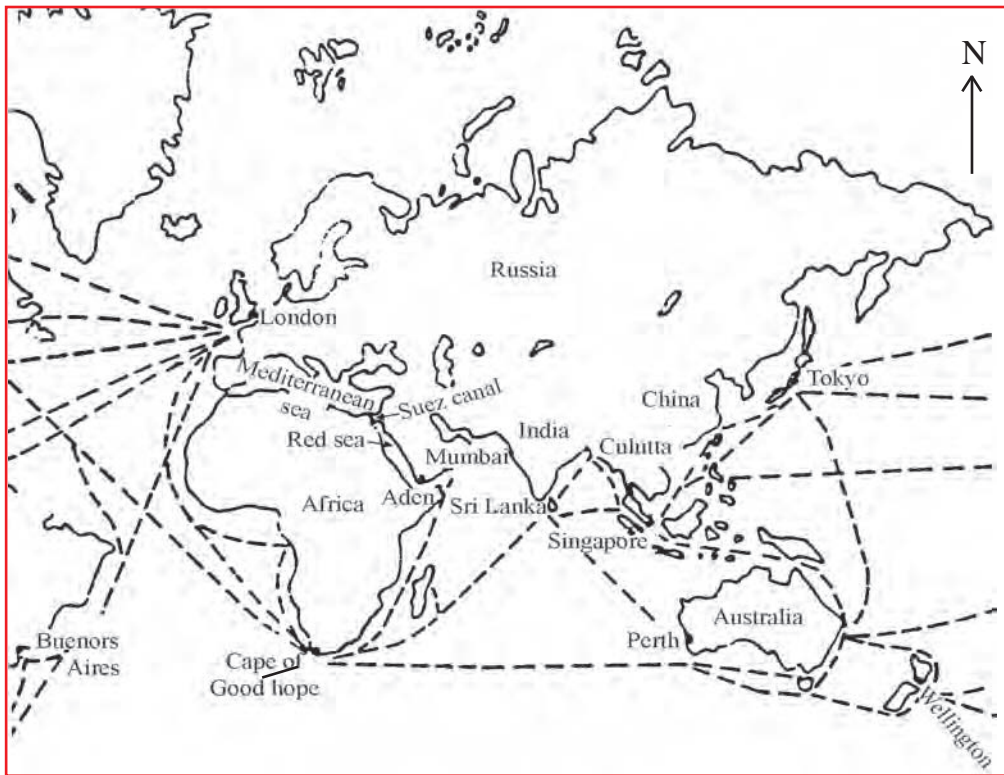
The world map drawn for the first time by Ptolemy, a Greek geographer, is shown in Map. 2.3. He has mentioned Sri Lanka as "Taprobane". Hence, it is evident that Sri Lanka was known by other countries from early ages.

Many visitors from other countries in the past have mentioned about Sri Lanka in their notes. They have used several names for Sri Lanka. This shows that Sri Lanka was an important country for the others in the West and East.



Student survey

Prepare a table giving various names used by other nations to denote Sri Lanka.



Map 2.4: Navigational routes touching Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka received the attention of both the Portuguese and the Dutch because of its central location and possibilities to strengthen their trade. The British identified Sri Lanka as the best central place to expand and control their empire. Location of Sri Lanka in relation to naval routes is shown in Map 2.4. Sri Lanka has established many social, political and cultural relationships with the neighbouring countries. Similarly, those countries have extended their influences over Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka was a centre for navigators from early ages in history because of its special location. Traders from Arabian countries sailed to the Eastern world through Sri Lanka. There is evidence to show that Sri Lanka was a centre for exchange of goods in the trade between East and West.



Activities

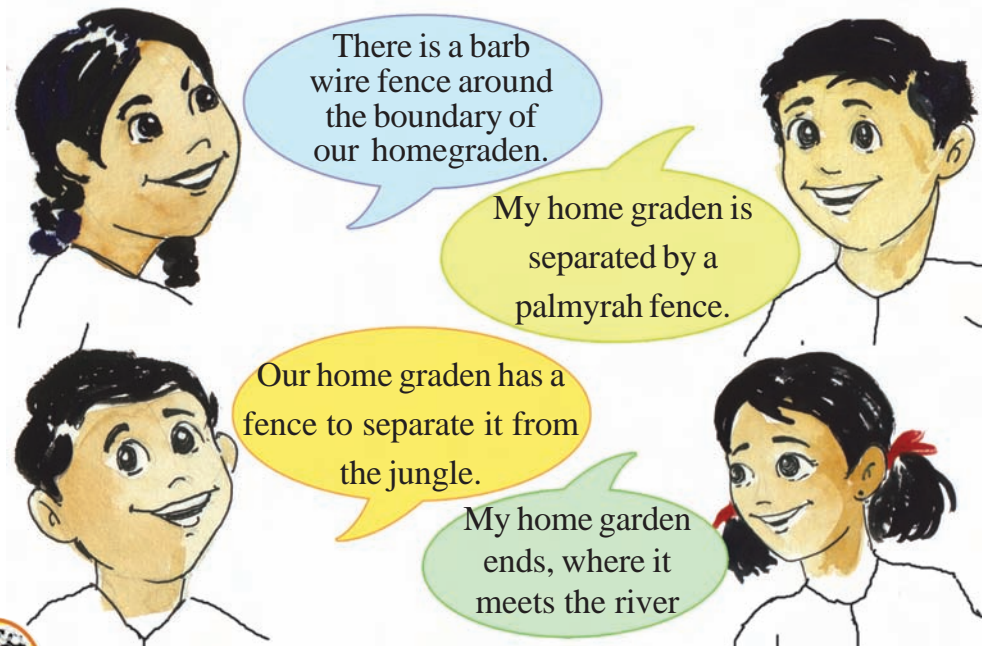
1. Mark and name the following in an outline map of the world. Sri Lanka, Red Sea, Persian Bay, Strait of Malacca, Indian Ocean, China, Continent of Australia and Mediterranean sea.
2. Insert navigational routes in it, and name their destinations.

We are citizens of one nation although we have diverse ethnic and religious affiliations.

Administrative Divisions of Sri Lanka

Although Sri Lanka is a small island, it has been divided into many units for purposes of administration. These divisions have been based on different types of boundaries. Your house as well as your school has its own boundary. These boundaries could be changed due to various reasons. Some of the views expressed by the students in the class about such boundaries are given below.

Natural boundaries like mountain ranges, rivers, canals or man made roads are used as boundaries of administrative units in Sri Lanka.



Activities

1. According to the discussion above what are the things used as boundaries of a land.
2. After dividing the class into five groups prepare a table to indicate how the boundaries of each student's garden is demarcated.
3. From an atlas map of Sri Lanka, identify and note down the rivers used as boundaries of provinces.
4. Name those provinces separated by rivers. Examine whether the province you live in is also separated by a river boundary.

The smallest unit of administration in Sri Lanka is Grama Niladhari Division. There may be several Grama Niladhari Divisions when villages or towns are very large. On the other hand, one G.N. Division may cover large areas when their populations are small.

Every Grama Niladhari Division has a number and a name. Every house or building in a Grama Niladhari Division has a household number. Grama Niladhari is the closest officer to the villagers.

Many G.N. Divisions constitute a Divisional Secretary's Division of Sri Lanka. District is a collection of D.S. Divisions and two or more districts make a province. The structure of administration in Sri Lanka is based on these provincial units.



Activities

1. Write an essay on the duties performed by the Grama Niladhari.
2. Get the names and numbers of the G.N. Divisions of all the students in the class. Categorise the data collected and include them in a table.
3. Indicate the ways in which the Grama Niladhari can assist the development of your village.



Student survey

1. Meet the Grama Niladhari. Find and note down the names of the villages that belong to your Grama Niladhari division.
2. Draw the sketch of your Grama Niladhari Division and mark where your house is located.
3. Find the basis on which your village or town is demarcated and discuss it in the class.

Units of Administration in Sri Lanka	
Grama Niladhari Divisions	14,022
Divisional Secretary's Divisions	331
Districts	25
Provinces	09

Source: Department of Census and Statistics, 2004

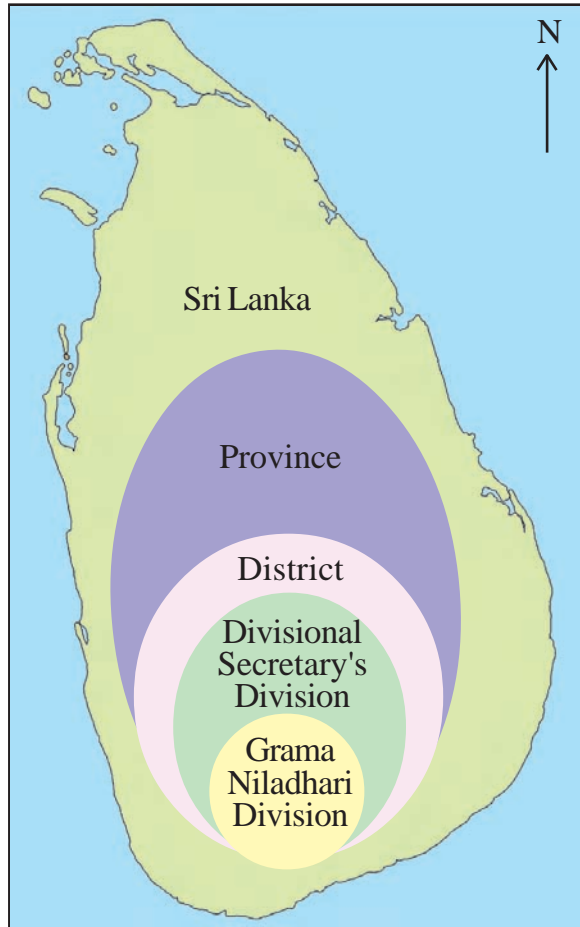


Fig 2.1 : Units of Administration in Sri Lanka.



Activities

1. Name the administrative units of Sri Lanka
2. Name the Grama Niladhari Division, Divisional secretary's Division, District and province in which you live.

Different staff members are appointed at G.N, D.S. Division, district and provincial levels to facilitate administration and separate files are maintained for different activities. From these files we can get information on land, population and housing, agriculture, industries, roads as well as on communication networks. In addition there is information on natural disasters such as floods, landslides, droughts and cyclones.



Activities

1. Organise a field trip to your Divisional Secretary's office. Divide into groups and collect information about the administrative functions of that office.
2. On the basis of group reports presented to the class, discuss the information you have collected.



Student survey

1. Collect the addresses of schools from children's paper articles. Prepare a table of these school addresses with the assistance of your teacher according to provinces, Districts, Zones and Divisions.
2. Prepare a chart to show how the administrative structure of your school is formed.



Activities

1. Study the Map 2.5 and make a group discussion with the assistance of your teacher how the provinces are divided and about their boundaries.
2. Fill in this table after studying the map.

Province	No. of districts in the province	Name of the district	Capital city of the district

3. Name the largest and the smallest districts in Sri Lanka.
4. What province includes the highest number of districts ?
5. Trace this map with correct symbols showing provinces and districts.
6. Shade the district and province to which your school belongs. Use light brown colour for the province and dark brown colour for the district.
7. Name the districts and provinces adjoining those you have shaded.



Map.2.5 Provinces and Districts of Sri Lanka

The symbols used to show administrative boundaries of Sri Lanka are as follows.

- ▲ Provincial boundary + -- + -- + --
- ▲ District boundary + • + • + •
- ▲ Divisional Secretary's Division boundary - ... -... - ...
- ▲ Grama Niladhari Division boundary - • - • - •
- ▲ Town Limit - - - - -



Student survey

1. Examine a map of Sri Lanka. List the provinces according to their size.
2. Write four reasons why the Western province has a large population.

Every citizen has the equal rights even though the country is divided into units for easy administration.

Climate

You must have listened to the weather report at the end of the news telecast on Rupavahini.

Tomorrow will be a rainy day. There will be heavy rain in the West, South and Western slopes of the Central Highlands due to South Western winds. Minimum temperature reported today is from Nuwara Eliya.



Activity

Read the weather report and write the elements of weather mentioned in the forecast.

The weather is the state of the atmosphere at a specific short period of time in a certain place.

The atmospheric conditions of a place depend on the temperature, rainfall, humidity, windspeed and direction of wind etc. Collection of data on weather for a long time enables to get an idea about the climate.

The climate of a particular place or country is determined by generalizing on weather for a long time.



Student survey

1. Use the thermometer in your school to measure and record temperature at different times of the day.
2. Discuss in class with reference to your area, whether the information given in the weather forecast has been realized.

A number of factors influence the nature of climate of a country. Particularly the temperature can vary according to the angle of the sun's rays falling on the Earth's surface. Equatorial region gets more heat due to the perpendicular rays falling on these areas while lesser temperatures are recorded towards the poles due to the inclined nature of sun's rays.

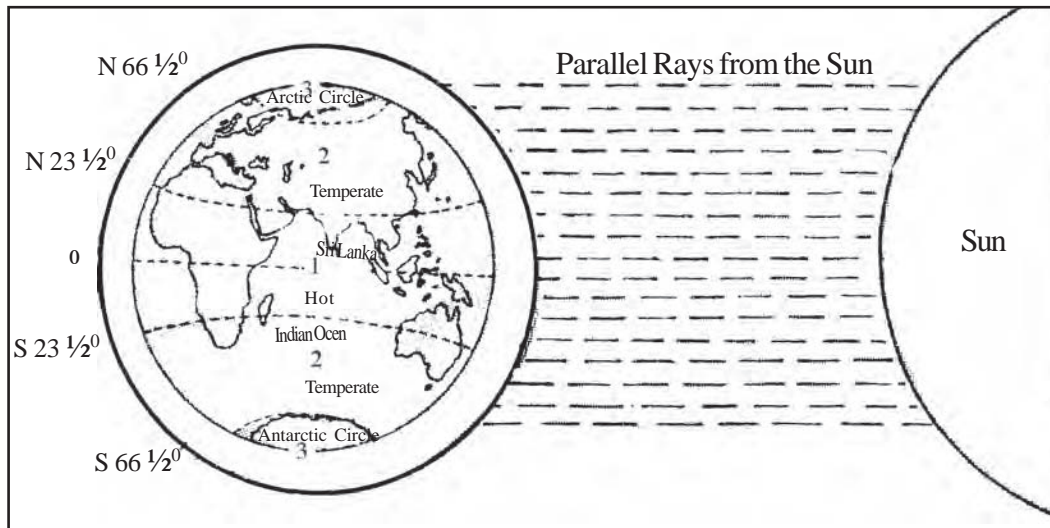
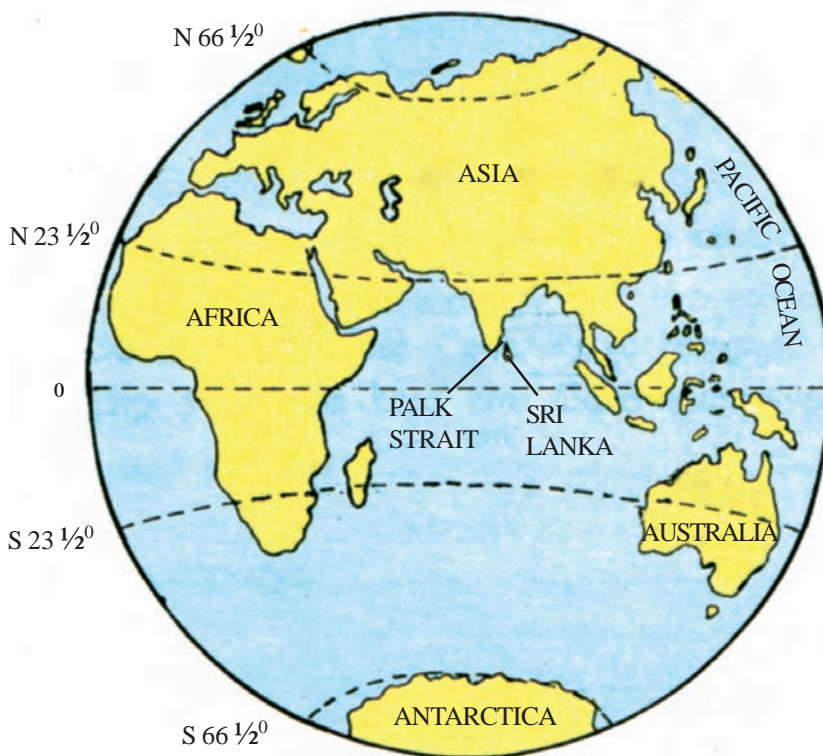


Fig 2.2 : The Sun's rays falling on the Earth..

Sri Lanka has a high temperature throughout the year because of its location between 5° - 10° N latitude. However, high temperatures are modified as the country is an island. Average annual temperature of Sri Lanka is 27.8° C. Yet there are small regional variations.



Map 2.6 : Location of Sri Lanka close to the equator.

Sri Lanka is situated close to the equator. It has a uniform temperature throughout the year. Map 2.6 shows the location close to the equator.



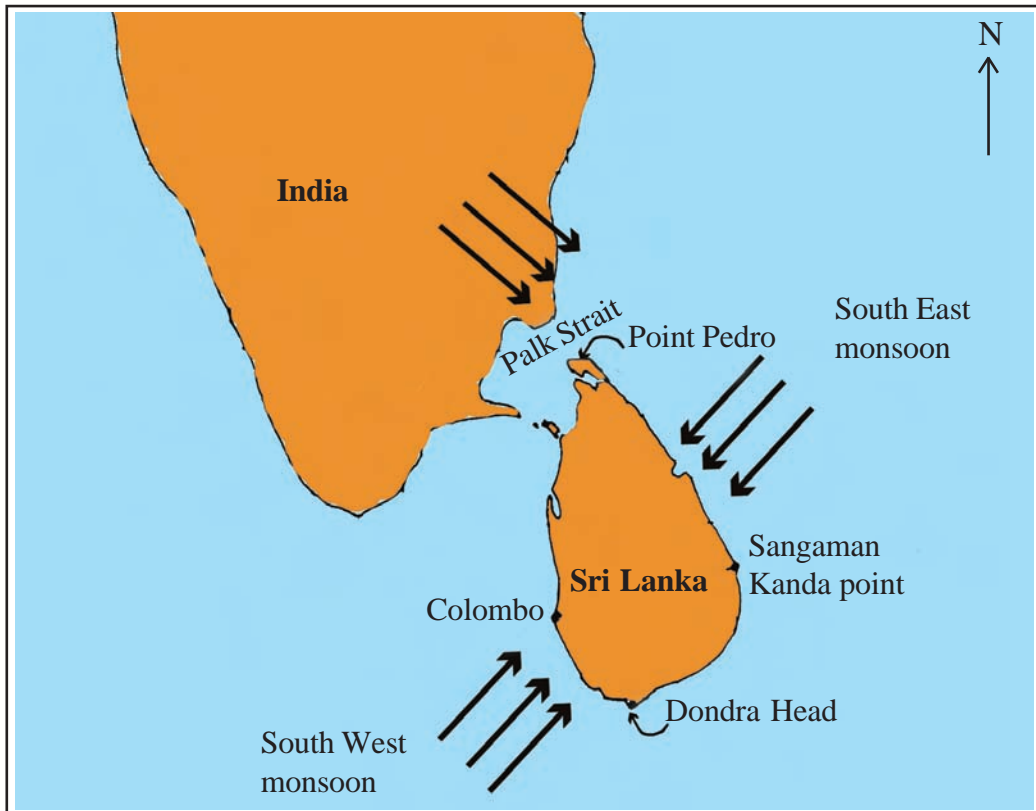
Activity

Observe the maps 2.6 and name the nearest, important latitude to Sri Lanka.

Have you been to Sri pada or any other peak? If you have not been there get the information from some one who has climbed such a peak. You will feel colder when you climb higher and higher. The reason is that the temperature decreases gradually as you go up. There is a decrease of temperature 0.64°C for each 100 m. of latitude above sea level.

You will feel comfortable when you go to the sea beach by the cooling effect of the sea breeze. As the sea is cooler than land in the day time, winds from the sea reduce the land temperature. Sri Lanka receives this oceanic

effect throughout the year because it is a small island. Any place in the country is less than 112 km away from the sea. The effect of the sea and height of the land act as two factors which decide the temperature of a place.



Map 2.7: Sri Lanka's location facing the monsoons

As the map shows the monsoon winds blow seasonally over the Island. They are the Southwest monsoon and Northeast monsoons. The temperature decreases slightly in the areas over which the monsoons blow.

The temperature of the Northern part of Sri Lanka is relatively high because of two reasons namely, location near the Indian land mass and low humidity levels of the air blowing over the land.

Even though Sri Lanka is a small island there are regional variations of temperature due to its specific location.

The factors that influence the variation of temperature in Sri Lanka.

1. Latitudinal location
2. Altitude (height of land)
3. Distance from the sea
4. Proximity to the Indian landmass
5. Effect of the monsoons



Activities

1. Trace an outline map of Sri Lanka. Draw the average annual temperature lines (isotherms) of Sri Lanka in red with the help of an atlas.
2. Name the areas where the temperature is high and where it is low.
3. What is the average temperature of the area you live in. Discuss with your teacher, about the reasons for the existing level of temperature and make notes.

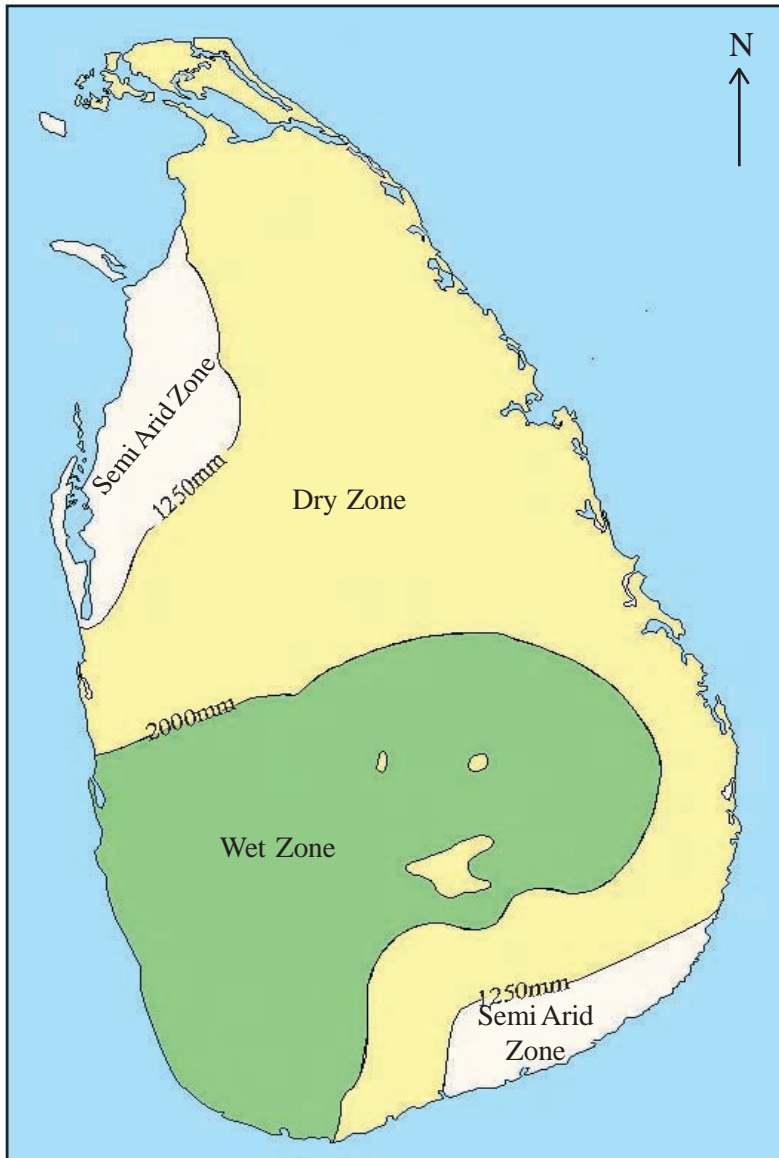


Student survey

1. Study the temperature distribution of Sri Lanka from an atlas map. Find the average temperature of Colombo, Galle, Trincomale, Hambantota, Kandy, Talawakele, Nuwara Eliya, and Pidurutalagala areas and discuss the regional variation of temperature in different areas.

Rainfall

Rainfall is one of the major factors in the climate of Sri Lanka. The country receives rain throughout the year. Average annual rainfall varies between 750mm and 6000 mm.



Map 2.8 : Climatic Zones of Sri Lanka

The average annual rainfall of Sri Lanka.

- Area receiving over 2000 mm of rainfall is the Wet Zone.
- Rainfall between 1250 - 2000 mm marks the Dry Zone.
- Less than 1250 mm of rain is received by the Semi Arid Zone.

Types of Rainfall in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka receives rain by three methods, viz,

1. Convictional rain
2. Monsoon rain by Southwest Monsoon and Northeast monsoon
3. Cyclones or depressions.

Factors such as the island location, relief and wind circulation cause different types of rain in different seasons.

● **Convictional rain**

Although convictional activity occurs year round, it is subdued during monsoonal periods, Sri Lanka experiences convictional rain mainly in the inter-monsoon months of March-April and October-November. The special feature of convictional rain is that it is accompanied by thunder and lightning and is received in late afternoons.

● **Southwest Monsoon rain**

The moisture-laden winds blowing over the Indian Ocean crossing Sri Lanka brings lot of rain to the Southwest and Western parts of the hill country. This pattern dominates from May to September. These winds rise up the slopes of the mountains in the interior of Sri Lanka and cause heavy precipitation due to condensation.

● **Northeast Monsoon rain**

These winds originating in the Indian landmass and coming through the Bay of Bengal enter Sri Lanka from Northeast between December and February. These winds are not so powerful as the Southwest monsoon.

Sri Lanka has a special identity by way of climate when compared with other countries of the world. The bio - diversity generated by this climatic pattern has attracted many tourists. A special feature about the climate is that the striking regional variation could be experienced even during a one day trip across the country.

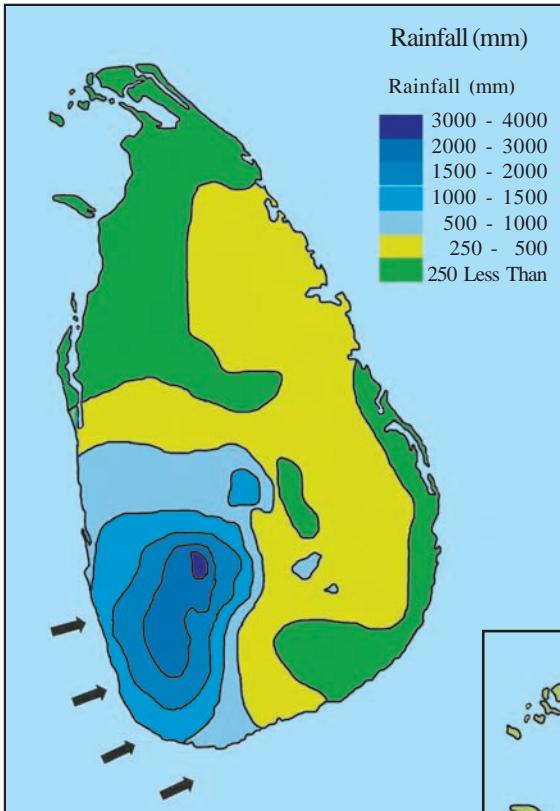
● **Cyclones**

Sri Lanka receives a considerable rainfall by cyclones or depressions. Cyclones occur mainly during the months of October and November.

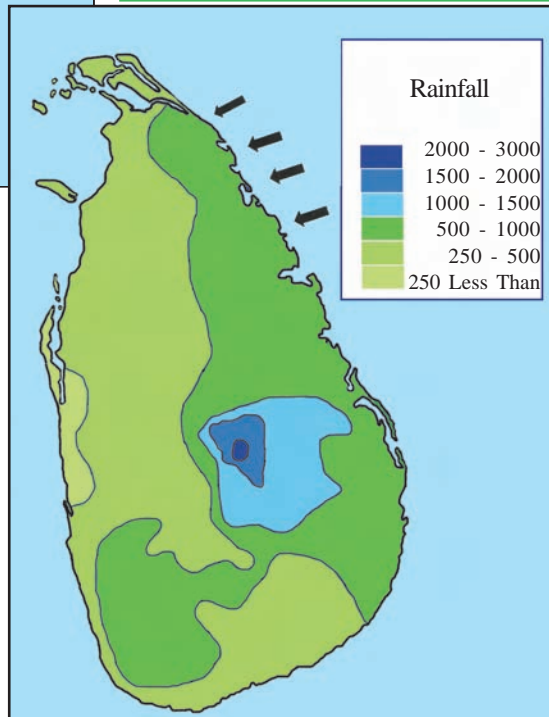


Student survey

1. i. Plan an educational trip to a place with a different type of climate from that of yours.
- ii. Discuss the differences between the two places.
2. i. What is the dominant type of rainfall in your area.
- ii. Indicate the months during which this type of rainfall is experienced and the nature of rainfall received.



Map 2.9 - Rainfall pattern of the South-west monsoon



Map 2.10 -Rainfall pattern of Northeast monsoon

Economy

You have learned that the location of Sri Lanka has given it a unique climate. The settlements of the country were modeled according to its geographical background.

Although the past economy of Sri Lanka was completely agriculture based, the present day economy has changed to include numerous economic activities.



Fig 2.3: Some economic activities in Sri Lanka



Activities

Observe Fig 2.3 Write down economic activities shown in it . Classify the information as agricultural, industrial and service sectors.



Student survey

1. Divide the class into different groups and conduct a field survey of economic activities in your area.
2. Write reports using the collected information.
3. Discuss with the teacher the reasons for the existing pattern of economic activity and make notes.
4. Prepare a booklet giving the fields that can be developed in the economy of your area.

The economy of Sri Lanka consists of agricultural industrial and service sectors.

Agricultural sector promoted by fertile soils, conducive climate and water availability is more significant in the Sri Lankan landscape.

Agricultural sector consists of three categories.

1. Crop cultivation
2. Animal husbandry
3. Fishing industry

The other sectors of the economy include industries and services. Agro economy supports the major development efforts of the country. Both food crops and export crops are important in this context.

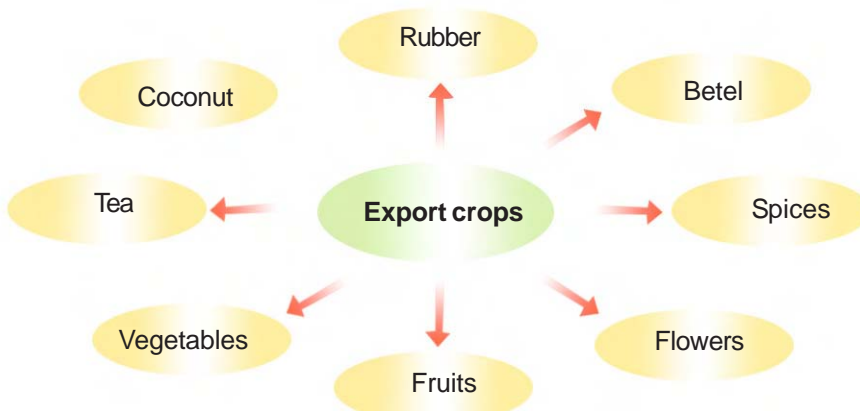


Fig 2.4

Fishing Industry

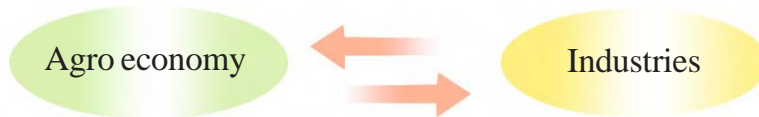
Salt water fishing industry around the sea coast and fishing in freshwater in tanks and rivers as well as animal husbandry in natural grasslands and home gardens are also noteworthy economic activities. Nature of the land, soil, climate and cultural factors have influenced the distribution of animal husbandry in Sri Lanka.



Activity

Construct a calendar that exhibits the economy of Sri Lanka and exhibit it in the class. This should be done as a group activity.

Industries



There is a close relationship between agriculture and industry in Sri Lanka. Some of the industries depend on the agricultural raw materials. For example, sugar cane for sugar industry, rubber for tyre and many other industries.

Sri Lanka possesses resources by nature. Our Industries are based on these resources.



Student survey

Fill in the following table with industries based on local agricultural raw materials in your village / town / district or province.

Industrial product	Raw material used



Activities

1. Prepare a poster to show the industries which are based on agricultural raw materials.
2. What proposals could be made to develop agriculture and industry in your area ?

Sri Lanka is rich in many minerals. Numerous industries based on these raw materials are distributed in different locations in Sri Lanka.

Examples: Clay:- Tiles, Bricks, Ceramic industries,

Gems:- Jewellery industry,

Limestone :- Cement industry,

Coral :- Lime producing industry.

There are small scale industries that are essentially village based. Masks in Ambalangoda, Brass industry in Kandy, Palmyrah leaf associated industry in Jaffna are some examples. Nevertheless, they contribute much to the development of the country.

Service Sector

Service unit as well as the agriculture and industry play a great impact on the economy of a country.

Eg: Education, Health facilities, transport, Media, Financial Services, Whole sale and retail business, Technical Services, Administrative Counselling Services.



Activities

1. Examine whether there are natural resource based industries in the region surrounding your school. If so, collect the relevant data and prepare a table.
2. Name the cottage industries in your area. What are the benefits your village has gained from those industries.



Student survey

Find out a cottage industry that you can do in the future. List your needs for that industry.

Although Sri Lanka is a small country in relation to the other countries of the world, it possesses a special identity. Because of this special identity Sri Lanka received an important place in trade and navigation from very early times. Even today we have gained the attention of the world community because of this factor. So we must get together to safeguard this special identity.

