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Floods kill 50 in DR Congo, leave thousands homeless

BY AFP

DR CONGO. Floods triggered by heavy rains and a river bursting its banks have killed at least 50 people and left thousands more homeless in southwestern Congo, a provincial governor said Thursday.

Torrential rains caused the Kalamu river, which flows through the city of Boma into the River Congo, to overflow for two hours before the waters receded, washing some of the victims across the border

into Angola.

The waters left parts of the city, Democratic Republic of Congo's sole Atlantic port, covered in up to a metre of mud and a search was under way to dig out more bodies that may be buried.

"The rains on the night of Monday to Tuesday in Boma have caused at least 50 deaths," Jacques Mbadu, governor of Kongo Central province told AFP.

"We buried 31 bodies on Wednesday and we expect to get about 20

more bodies back today that ended up across the border in Angola," Mbadu added.

How it happened

Mbadu said the waters hit a peak of two metres (six feet) above their usual level, destroying at least 500 homes and leaving several thousand people homeless.

Boma, which lies near the mouth of the River Congo around 470 kilometres (300 miles) southwest of the capital Kinshasa, is home

to between 150,000 and 200,000 people.

"This is a cyclical phenomenon which happens every 10 years. It last happened in January 2015 but with climate change it's now happened again in December 2016," Mbadu said.

Locals told AFP that two of the city's three districts were still covered in mud, up to a metre deep in some places, and described tragic scenes as the waters rushed dramatically into their houses.