

VENICE: 70% OF THE CITY FLOODED



The ire of the residents of Venice, the city of gondolas and the famous waterways, was unleashed on the weather forecasters, following the unprecedented rise in the water level that affected not only everyday life but also business.

The backlash of the rising levels of the sea could be seen on the streets of Venice. Tourists completely unprepared used polythene packets to cover their legs. Those a little more adventurous made the most of it by taking a dip at St. Mark's Square, which sees tourists in large numbers, particularly on Sundays.

Bad weather that preceded got worse with rains and flooding reported from Tuscany and Vicenza that lie to the south of Venice. **The Adriatic's water level rose by an alarming 5 feet or 1.49 meters.**

1966 had brought a similar fear of high water or 'acqua alta', when the rising levels had forced many residents to evacuate and abandon their homes. The present high water comes many years later but is now said to be the sixth highest ever reached wherein almost 70% of the city was inundated. Even the wooden platforms lying close to the waterways were washed away.

The faulty weather prediction was another reason for the unpreparedness of the residents. While the forecast talked about a mere 1.2 meter rise, it turned out to be much more and enough to create havoc and panic. Facebook has seen the outpourings of the grudge and disgruntlement against the city council authorities.

Shopkeepers like Matelda Bottoni complained that because of the incorrect prediction, many left their homes for outings and could not return due to the rising water levels. She however was not completely surprised at the event calling it almost a regular feature of being close to the canal. Having restructured and refurnished her shop to withstand the almost regular flooding, she has ensured that there is least damage.

A hotelier in the vicinity spoke of his almost regular tryst with flooding having lived on the ground floor for many years, and stepping into a pool of water on many a morning. But running a commercial enterprise like a hotel is a different deal. With added work of disinfecting the floors, the flooding caused a great deal of alarm among the residents in his hotel, particularly Americans who wondered at the lack of long term solution for a problem as regular as this.

Defending the forecast, the public works assessor Alessandro Maggioni pointed out that accuracy of such prediction was quite impossible and that the water level could only be forecasted to an approximate. He went on to add that **the city would benefit a great deal from the Moses flood barrier system due to be completed by 2015.** It will not only protect the lagoon but also help in keeping the residents safe from flooding.

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