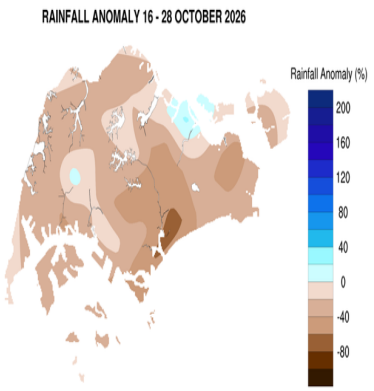

Haze eases as the inter-monsoon arrives, but afternoon storms move weekend plans earlier

Description

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The haze that hung over Singapore for much of October is on its way out, and the weather turning it away brings its own problem for weekend plans. The National Environment Agencyâ??s advisory of 29 October expects the haze situation to improve as the inter-monsoon period sets in, with smoke from the region less likely to be blown towards the island.

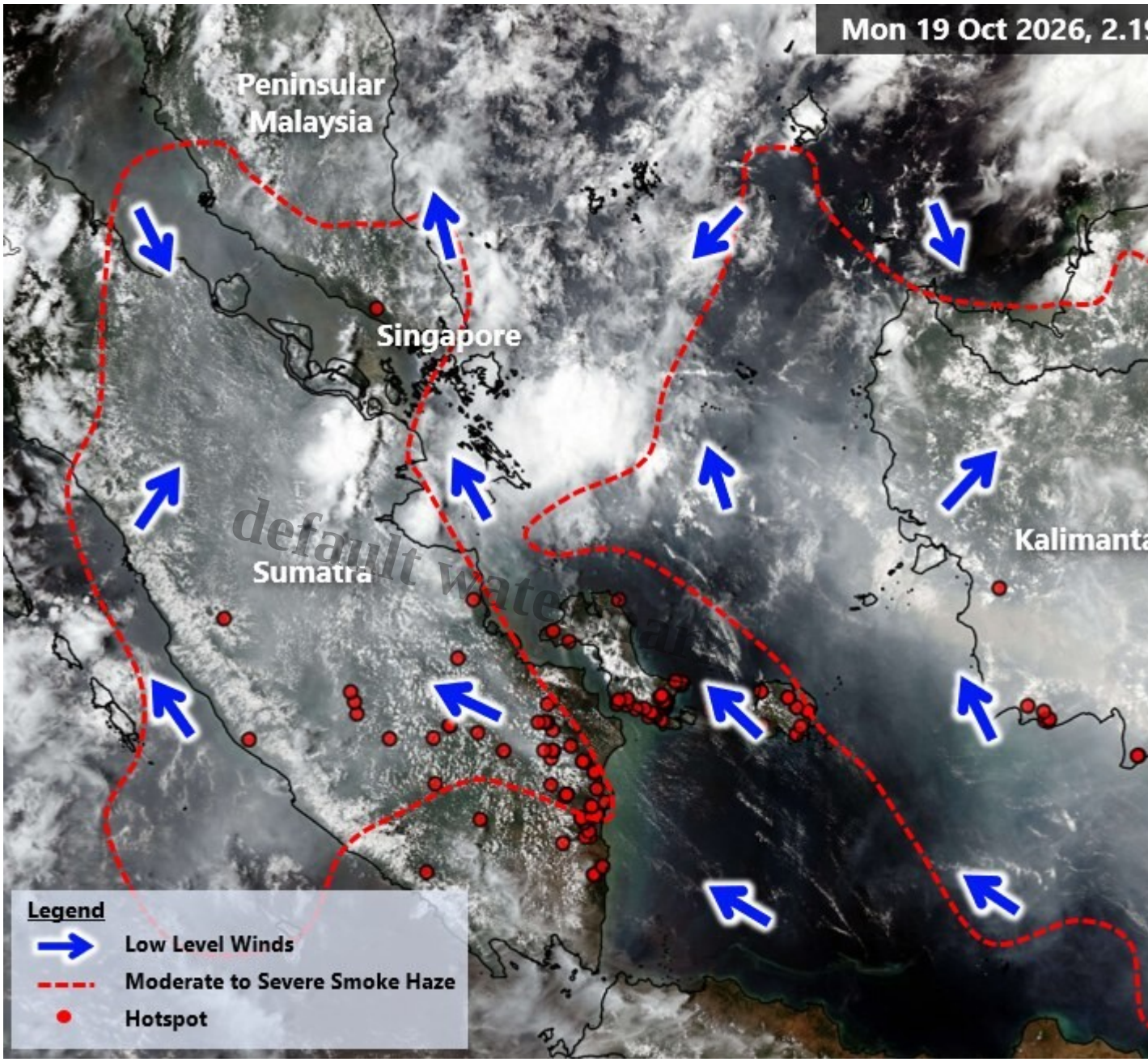
The trade-off is rain. The inter-monsoon brings light and variable winds, more showers and more lightning, and the afternoons are where most of it lands.

Why the haze is easing

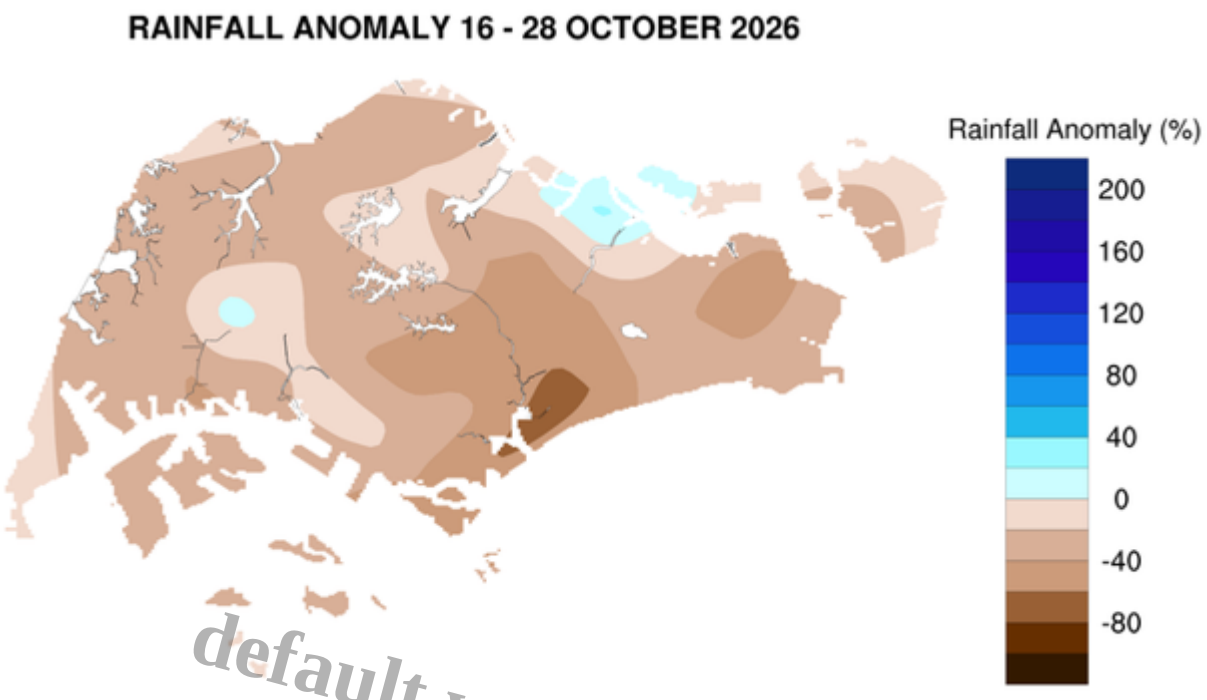
The Southwest Monsoon, which carried smoke from fires in Kalimantan across to Singapore, is weakening. In its place come the light, shifting winds of the inter-monsoon period, which do a poor job of moving smoke over long distances.

The 24-hour PSI is the measure to watch. It sat between 62 and 78, in the Moderate range, at every evening reading from 26 to 29 October, and MSS forecasts 60 to 90, still Moderate, for 30 October.

Showers over Sumatra and parts of Borneo help keep the smoke from building. NEAâ??s evening update on 29 October still showed scattered hotspots, mainly in southern Kalimantan, with smoke plumes over southern and eastern Kalimantan and Sulawesi.



Smoke haze from Sumatra and Kalimantan on 19 October. Image: Meteorological Service Singapore



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Rainfall across Singapore from 16 to 28 October against the long-term average. Map: Meteorological Service Singapore

The risk has not gone away entirely. Parts of the southern ASEAN region stay dry, and transboundary haze can still develop where the dry spell drags on.

Plan outdoor time for the morning

The Meteorological Service Singaporeâ??s outlook for 29 October to 15 November calls for moderate to heavy thundery showers over parts of the island in the afternoon on most days. On a few days the showers run into the evening.

For anyone planning a run, a beach day or a picnic this weekend, that points to early starts. A morning slot at East Coast Park or the Southern Ridges is more likely to stay dry than a 3pm one, and evening barbecues carry the risk of a late storm.

Lightning is the bigger safety concern. More of it comes with the inter-monsoon, so open fields, beaches and the water are the places to leave when thunder starts, with shelter in a building or a closed vehicle.

Hot days between the storms

Rain does not mean cool. Daily highs are forecast at 33Â°C to 35Â°C on most days, going slightly above 35Â°C on a few, so water and shade still matter on dry afternoons.

Total rainfall for the first fortnight of November is expected to come in slightly above the long-term average. November is usually one of the wettest months of the year, with an average of 252.3mm of rain over 19 rain days.

Ministers press the haze-linked firms

On the policy side, Deputy Prime Minister Gan Kim Yong, Senior Minister K Shanmugam and Minister for Sustainability and the Environment Grace Fu met leaders of the 10 Singapore-based companies served notices under the Transboundary Haze Pollution Act at a closed-door session at The Treasury on 28 October. The firms pledged to cooperate with the investigation.

The second half of October was among the worst stretches of the year. Between 16 and 28 October, air quality reached the unhealthy range on seven days and the very unhealthy range on three.

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