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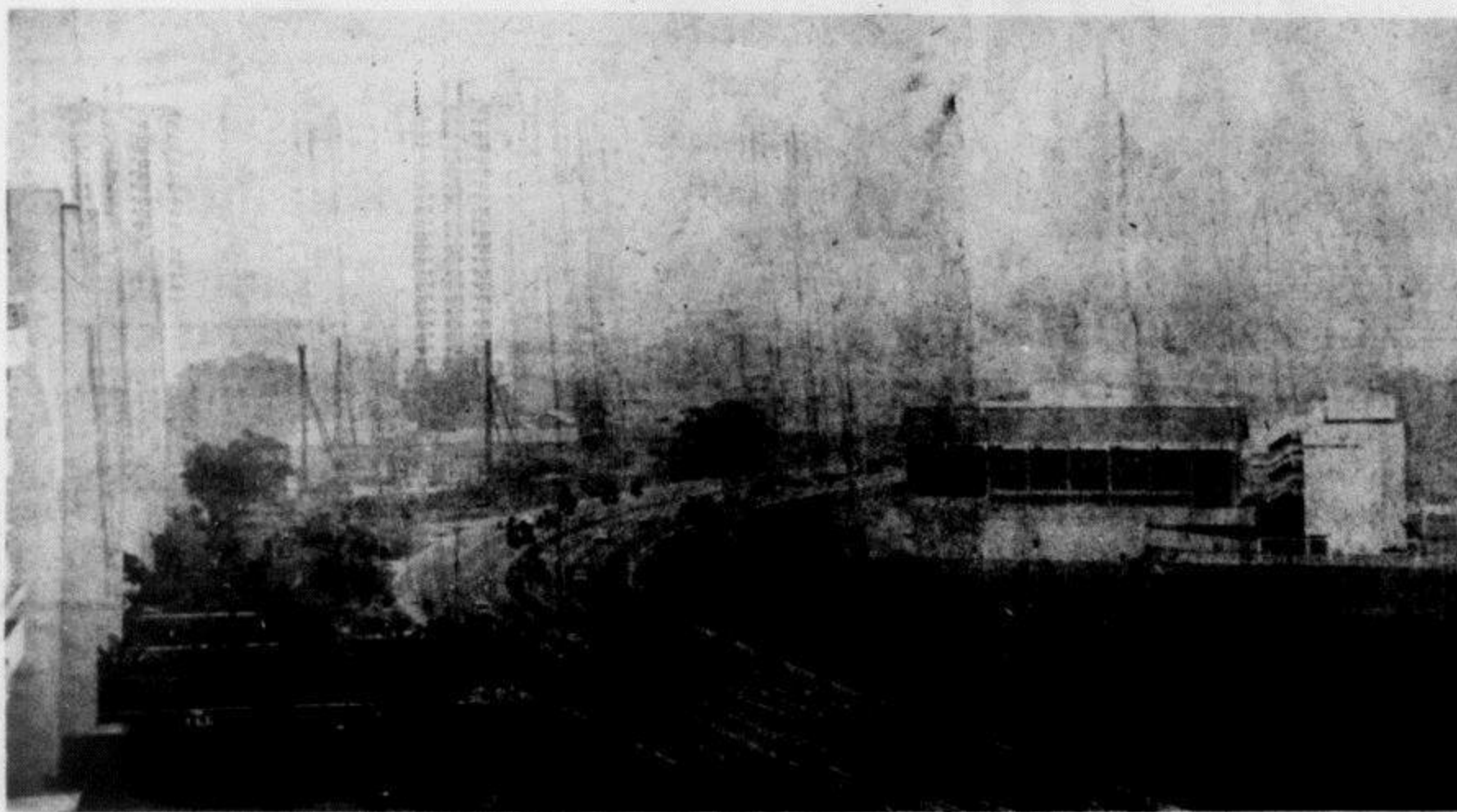
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Sumatra forest fires to blame

HAZE COVERS WHOLE ISLAND



By CORINNE THAM

SINGAPOREANS yesterday woke to find the whole island shrouded in a smoky haze and visibility was so poor in some areas that even familiar towering skyscrapers could hardly be seen from short distances.

The haze was probably the result of smoke blown over to Singapore and parts of Peninsular Malaysia from forest fires raging in Sumatra.

The smoky mist was carried over to this region with

an overnight change in wind direction.

The haze was 366 metres high, a Meteorological Department spokesman said yesterday, and covered Sumatra, the western and southern parts of Peninsular Malaysia and Singapore.

Thick smoke has been reported over Sumatra, to the south and south-west of Singapore for more than a week.

According to him, the haze was caused by forest fires which occurred in Sumatra but Singapore was not affected until yesterday

as the winds were originally from east to south-east.

The mist was carried over to Singapore and the surrounding region only when prevailing winds changed direction.

Families who awoke at dawn to find the haze hanging over the city thought initially it was the usual morning mist.

When the haze failed to clear up later in the morning, some made frantic calls to the Meteorological Station. Others thought that the mist was a sign of bad weather, and possibly storms, were approaching.

The mist also affected the eyesight of some people. Several residents from various housing estates complained that it irritated their eyes.

One of them, a police officer said: "I had to drive all the way to Changi yesterday and my eyes were filled with tears due to the haze."

A housewife staying in Ohim Moh estate claimed that there were hailstones falling from the sky.

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The weather
WEATHER forecast from 6 a.m. to noon today: No rain.

'Cabinet plotting against Suharto'

JAKARTA, Thursday

A MYSTIC accused of trying to topple the Indonesian Government claimed in court today that members of the Cabinet were conspiring against President Suharto.

Mr. Sawito Karlowidowo, 45, who could be sentenced to death by firing squad if found guilty of subversion, told the central Jakarta district court he had been cooperating with people such as Attorney-General Ali Said before being arrested in September last year.

"From this place I wish to warn President Suharto to be alert, particularly against those around him," Mr. Sawito said.

At one stage in his prepared statement, which lasted almost three hours and drew frequent applause from

the court-room packed with students and other observers, Mr. Sawito said the panel of three judges was not qualified to try him because they did not know anything about transcendental experiences.

'Case'

Mr. Sawito, a former employee of the Ministry of Agriculture, implied that high-ranking people in Indonesia's military-backed government were only waiting for President Suharto to leave office.

"Before being arrested I was told by the Attorney-General that his department had prepared a case against President Suharto, to be used in the days when he was no longer president," Mr. Sawito said.

Mr. Sawito has been under arrest since the

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Nabbed: 2 S'poreans in drug ring

BARCELONA, Thurs. — Spanish police have arrested four suspected members of an international drug smuggling ring who tried to take possession of 218 million pesetas (208.5 million) worth of heroin, police said yesterday.

Of the four suspects arrested two were Singaporeans and two were Dutch women.

The operation began at the airport in Rome where Italian police discovered four suitcases which — hidden in false

bottoms — contained the large quantity of heroin.

Spanish police said the drug was removed from the suitcases and that they were sent on to their designated destination — Barcelona. They then nabbed the persons who claimed the bags at the local airport.

Police identified the Dutch suspects as Francesca Johanna Witte, 21, and Everdina Verr, 28. The two others were said to be Chia Thai San, 34, and Nancy Koh, 28, — UPL.

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2 sections

TODAY'S Straits Times is 56 pages in two sections. Make sure you get both.

PRIME Minister Malcolm Fraser, gambling that his conservative coalition government can win a second term, today announced a snap general election for Dec. 10.

He made his announcement of an early poll—more than a year ahead of the expiry of his government's three-year term—to a noisy and packed House of Representatives where he commands a record majority.

Mr Fraser calculated a pre-Christmas national poll—the fourth in the last five years—will enable his Liberal-National Country Party coalition to extend its period in office before an expected surge in the current record unemployment level early next year threatens his government's stability, political observers said.

The announcement ended more than three months of election speculation which rose to fever pitch as the government battled to lower rampant inflation, contain a flood of wage demands, revive flagging business activity and quell a spate of industrial strikes and stoppages in key sectors of the economy.

Coalition

Latest opinion polls tipped Mr. Fraser to win his gamble and be returned to power but with a greatly reduced parliamentary majority, enabling the coalition to pursue its tough financial and economic policies until the end of 1980.

The Fraser Government, according to informed sources, was prepared to lose 20 or more seats in the lower house where it now commands a 53 seat majority over the Labour opposition and normally has the support of at least two more members.

In the Senate it holds

★ See Page 32 - Col. 6

HK police angry over graft arrests

HONGKONG, Thurs.

THE arrest of 34 serving and retired policemen and their impeachment yesterday has created a furor among a large number of men of the Hongkong police force.

Four hundred of them held a meeting during which they accused the government's anti-graft bureau—the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC)—of persecuting policemen and claimed that as a result morale in the force had touched rock bottom.

The complaint follows a relentless crackdown by the ICAC on corruption syndicates within the police force which in some cases had led to the arrest of more than 100 policemen suspected of having taken money from narcotics traffickers. These men are out on bail pending further investigation.

CONSPIRACY

The 34 who were charged in court yesterday are accused of having conspired with other policemen to pervert the course of justice and of having accepted advantages in connection with their duties.

At their protest meeting the policemen who are up in arms against the ICAC sent a letter with nine complaints to the Commissioner of Police.

They allege that the ICAC was itself perverting the course of justice by using witnesses who were either convicted or people involved in illegal activities.

They also claim that prolonged ICAC investigations have caused mental strain and call for the early arrangement in court of accused policemen.

More than 30 senior Chinese police officers

★ See Page 32 - Col. 2

LATEST

Palestine state: No Arab vote

UNITED NATIONS, Thurs. — The Arab countries have agreed not to grow for a Security Council vote on a plan to establish a Palestine state in the Israeli-occupied West Bank of the Jordan River and the Gaza Strip, well-placed diplomatic sources said today.

They said the decision reflects an Arab desire to avoid a US-Arab confrontation while efforts are under way to convene the Geneva Middle East peace conference. —AP.



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