

Terror threats closer than Singaporeans think: ESM Goh

✓ **DANSON CHEONG, THE STRAITS TIMES**

The scourge of terrorism is closer than Singaporeans think, said Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong yesterday.

The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terror group is in Marawi in the Philippines, he noted, and could possibly establish itself in Myanmar's Rakhine state, where Muslim Rohingya refugees are fleeing fighting between the military and militants.

These developments, coupled with the presence of self-radicalised individuals here, means Singaporeans need to prepare themselves for an eventual terrorist attack, he said.

The Home Affairs Ministry had announced the arrests of two Singaporeans under the Internal Security Act a day earlier, the latest in a string of terrorism-related arrests this year.

Speaking at a dialogue to

mark the 13th anniversary of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, Mr Goh stressed that the real challenge would come after a terror attack.

"What will that mean for race relations — that's No. 1. If as a result of (an attack), race relations become fragile, broken, collapsed, then the terrorists would have achieved their purpose," he said.

He listed terrorism as one of two future challenges Singapore would face, in response to a question during the hour-long dialogue at the National University of Singapore.

The other challenge is how to get young Singaporeans to "accept politically" slower income growth, he said, given that Singapore will no longer see economic growth of 8 to 9 per cent.

This means incomes may grow at a slower rate of 2 to 3 per cent, but salaries will start from a higher base, he added.



ESM Goh Chok Tong.

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"If we can't convince you on that and if you have a change in government, and people think life will get better, I can tell you that life will get worse, very quickly, because the new government still will not be able to produce 5 to 6 per cent growth."

During the dialogue, Mr Goh shared personal experiences, like how the 2003 Sars crisis was the most frightening challenge he faced during his tenure as prime minister from 1990 to 2004.

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