

Students to learn how to handle crises

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Students in uniformed groups will be taught how to respond to national crises in a new programme to be rolled out mid-year.

First up to learn about the security challenges facing Singapore will be 4,000 scouts in secondary schools, said the Singapore Scout Association's deputy chief commissioner Tan Cheng Kiong.

They will have to take on projects about the importance of social harmony and cohesion, visit national heritage monuments and take part in a four-day camp to draw all the lessons together.

The deputy chief commissioner said the course would give them an edge over others in a crisis. 'They will know how to stay calm, not panic and help the people around them,' he said.

The programme, which will eventually be opened to other uniformed groups in schools, complements the National Education syllabus being taught, he added.

Such programmes raise awareness and help protect youth from being radicalised, said Senior Minister S. Jayakumar at a conference of security officials yesterday.

Speaking at the conference organised by the **S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies** and the **National Security Coordination Secretariat**, Prof Jayakumar said governments in the region could not afford to 'take their eye off the ball where security is concerned', even in the current economic downturn.

Prof Jayakumar, who is also Coordinating Minister for National Security, said that foiled terrorist plots in Indonesia, Spain and London 'remind us that terrorist cells are still there and are ready to mount attacks'.

The threats are constantly evolving, he said, referring to a recent report by global think-tank Rand Corporation warning of 'assumptions and blind spots' in the terrorist attack in Mumbai last November, which killed more than 170.

The report said that while the Indian authorities focused on potential bomb attacks on hotels and trains, they were blindsided by the simultaneous attacks in five different locations.

Prof Jayakumar said the Home Affairs Ministry will incorporate the lessons in a national emergency exercise, Northstar VII, to be held later this year.