

Singapore may have a third law school

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Singapore may have a third law school with an aim of training lawyers keen on practising community law such as criminal and family law.

This is one of the recommendations from the steering committee tasked to look into increasing the number of lawyers in Singapore.

The Law Ministry will study the proposal in consultation with the Education Ministry.

Currently, there are law schools in the National University of Singapore (NUS) and the Singapore Management University (SMU).

At a news conference today, Law and Foreign Affairs Minister, K Shanmugam says studies done by the committee showed that at present, there is a significant demand of lawyers who practise community law.

He said that if no measures were taken to address this, the shortage will be made worse.

"You produce the same type of students, as what SMU and NUS produces, and they have gravitated primarily to corporate law litigation, and that's why the smaller law firms have had great difficulties attracting them."

The committee suggested that the new law school should be hosted by a suitable local tertiary institution.

It should also preferably offer part-time LLB programmes for both undergraduates and graduate students.

The school's initial annual intake should be about 75 students, and should also be targetting mainly working adults such as paralegals, social workers or law enforcement officers. Only a restricted number of A-level students will be admitted.

Mr Shanmugam said that this is to offer working adults a second chance to start a career in the legal sector.

"We want to give alternate pathways for people who feel that they have gone into an area that doesn't suit them and they want a change. And when they come out of the third law school, they will still have to take our bar exams, and they would be qualified to practise in any area of the law and join any firm. It's not a different type of qualification that precludes them from practising in any specific area."

Other recommendations from the committee include increasing the annual law undergraduate intake of S-M-U to 180 students over 3 years, up from the current 120.

And to review the list of recognised Overseas Scheduled Universities or OSUs regularly.

The government has accepted the proposal to increase SMU's annual law intake.