By JACQUELYN CHEOK

As family and criminal law are traditionally seen as less lucrative than other areas of law such as corporate and commercial law, younger lawyers tend not to practise these areas on graduation. And this leads to a shortage of family and criminal lawyers in Singapore, says Noor Mohamed Marica, president of the Singapore Association of Muslim Lawyers.

But this may soon change with the establishment of a new law school in Singapore. The Ministry of Law unveiled the 12-member steering committee that will guide the development of the UnSIM law school.

Chaired by Senior Minister of State for Education and Law Indranee Rajah, the committee comprises legal professionals from both private and public sectors, such as prominent criminal lawyer Subhas Anandan, chief prosecutor Tai Wei Shyong, current chief district judge See Kee Oon, and Mr Noor. Other members include Valerie Thean, Cheong Hee Kiat, Raja Kumar s/o Thamny Rajah, Amarjeet Singh, Foo Fiew Fong and Narayanan Sreenivasan.

With the support of a curriculum working group, they will provide strategic direction for the school on matters such as educational philosophy, curriculum development and admissions criteria.

“We will be looking for high-calibre, mature students who have experience in fields related to criminal and family law,” Mr Noor told BT. “Graduates will be full-fledged lawyers who can practice in any area of the law they wish. And with a focus on criminal and family law in the course, they can hope to play a big role in closing the justice gap here.”

He added that the school serves as an option for people exploring a mid-career change to law. “It could also be a good place for social workers who regularly face troubled families and teenagers to acquire some legal knowledge so that we are better able to advise people who need legal help,” Dr Balhetchet, senior director and psychologist at the Singapore Children’s Society, told BT.

The creation of the UnSIM law school was announced in October by Education Minister Heng Swee Keat, following a call for more family and criminal lawyers in Singapore.