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 Page: 15
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Teenage brothers receive the Iscos Bursary Award

They work nights to help family of 10

● MELANIS TAI

In the wee hours, Mr Ahmad Darni, 17, and his brother Muhammad Zaidi, 18, clean LRT stations to help support their family of 10, which includes their two parents and six other siblings.

They started working from 11.30pm to 4.30am for six days a week in November last year, but Mr Zaidi stopped working in March as he needed more time for his studies.

Mr Darni, a first-year Nitec aerospace machining technology student at the Institute of Technical Education College Central, told The New Paper that juggling school and work was not easy.

He said: "It was hard as I would be sleepy in class, but now, it has been a year so I have learnt to cope with it and am used to it."

Their parents, housewife Safiah Wahab, 42, and security officer Halyman Othman, 43, are thankful to have such understanding children.

Madam Safiah said: "We are lucky that our children understand our financial situation and even take on part-time jobs to help us."

Mr Zaidi, a first-year Higher Nitec sports management stu-



TNP PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

dent at ITE College Central, added: "I am grateful to my parents. I take this as an opportunity to learn about how hard life really is out there."

Yesterday morning, both brothers received the Iscos Bursary Award at the MDIS Auditorium at Stirling Road.

The Industrial and Services Co-operative Society (Iscos) helps former offenders and their families. The award is a major initiative under the Yellow Ribbon Fund-Iscos Fairy Godparent Programme, which supports children of current and former offenders from low-income

families by way of education.

Students with commendable results are rewarded with bursaries ranging from \$200 to \$500 each, according to their education levels.

JAIL

Mr Halyman was convicted of drug abuse in 1987 and "was in and out" of jail until 1997.

His life changed when he met Madam Safiah, who was then a divorcee with a young daughter, who is now 22.

He said: "(My wife) is my biggest supporter. I turned over a new leaf for her and her young

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— Madam Safiah Wahab (left, with husband Halyman Othman and sons Muhammad Zaidi, in red, and Ahmad Darni)

daughter, who I treat as my own.

"I don't have any siblings and my father passed away when I was young, so when I met my wife and her family, I finally knew what a family felt like. This really made a difference as I enjoy being with my family."

However, with such a large family, Mr Halyman said his income alone was not enough.

"That is why I am thankful to Iscos for having programmes and awards that motivate my children to work hard at school," he said.

His 16-year-old daughter and eight-year-old son are also

part of the Iscos mentorship programme. Volunteers are matched to selected beneficiaries as mentors to provide a positive role model to the children.

Mr Darni and Mr Zaidi have been receiving the Iscos Bursary Award since they were in primary school.

"Our family is in a tight financial situation so this award helps to lift some burden off from my parents so they don't have to worry about whether we are eating in school or if we have enough money to spend on our daily needs," Mr Zaidi said.

Iscos awarded close to \$40,000 worth of bursaries to 133 students at the annual Iscos Bursary Award Ceremony this year, in recognition of their hard work and perseverance.

Mr Amrin Amin, Parliamentary Secretary for Home Affairs and Health, the guest of honour, said in a speech at the ceremony: "Education equips our youth with the knowledge and skills to unlock the doors of opportunities, and to achieve their aspirations in life.

"I am happy that Iscos recognises the importance of education and has done much to support education over the years."

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