

## SCHOLARSHIPS

# In harmony with Mother Nature

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**P**RIMATE conservation research hopeful Afiqah Mizan, 24, has made it her life's goal to improve the relationship between humans and Mother Nature by striving to protect the welfare of endangered animals.

A biotechnology degree holder from Rutgers University in the United States, Afiqah spent a summer conducting field research at the Tuanan Orangutan Conservation Centre in Kalimantan, under the Rutgers' School of Environmental Science summer scholarship programme.

She has also served as a research volunteer at three research centres in the US and frequently volunteers to help maintain animal welfare at zoos.

"I envision a world where the relationship between humans and Mother Nature is optimum. I would love to be a part of a movement that helps change the mindset of 'owning Earth' to 'harmoniously being a part of the ecosystem'.

"Not only in Malaysia, it is also globally achievable with everyone's cooperation," said Afiqah.

She is sole recipient of Yayasan Sime Darby's (YSD) Environment Scholarship, awarded to a local researcher to study the impact of a reforested habitat on Orangutan populations in the country.

She will undertake her research under the foundation's project to reforest and rehabilitate Orangutan habitats in Northern Ulu Segama Forest Reserve (now known as Bukit Piton Forest Reserve).

"I look forward to conducting research on the stress response of Orangutans to seasonal fruit scarcity at the reforested habitat in Bukit Piton Forest Reserve and work with renowned local as well as international researchers."

YSD Special Needs Bursary recipient Alif Najmi Bahari, 22, was born with a hearing impairment but that didn't stop him from learning to communicate through sign language and written communication.

Alif pursued a diploma in graphic and multimedia design, and received the Pahang Chief Minister's Award from Kolej Yayasan Pahang after he won the Dean's Award throughout his six semesters at the college.

"There will always be obstacles along the way but I believe that I will be able to excel in my studies with the help of my family, lecturers and friends.

"This scholarship will boost my confidence as I want to prove that minority people like me can do well in life," said Alif.

With a CGPA of 3.91, Alif is pursuing a Bachelor's of Business Administration in E-Commerce programme at the Infrastructure University Kuala Lumpur.

A month before the Sijil Tinggi Peperiksaan Malaysia examination, YSD scholarship recipient Mira Adila Mat Saruji lost her right arm and visibility in her right eye in a road accident.

However, with her resolve to excel in education, she taught herself to write with her left hand and made up for missed classes.

For her determination, Mira Adila, 23, was awarded the YSD Special Needs Bursary in 2014 to pursue the Bachelor's in Information Technology course at Universiti Tenaga Nasional (Uniten).

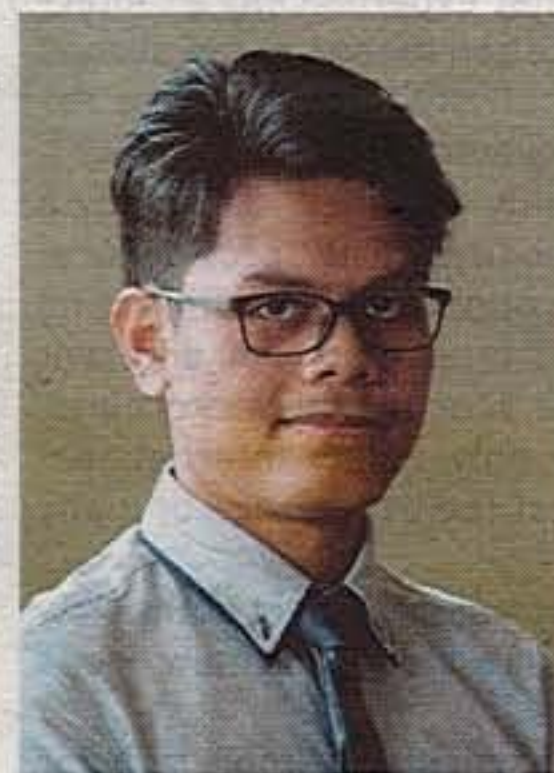
This year, she received the YSD Excellence



Mira Adila Mat Saruji (third from left) followed by Wan Mohd Zahid Mohd Noordin, Lim Pei Yee and Muus'ab Abdul Manan at the Sime Darby Convention Centre.  
PICTURE BY ZULFADHLI ZULKIFLI

**“When I face difficulties, I take a breather and carry on.”**

**MIRA ADILA MAT SARUJI,**  
YSD Scholarship recipient



Alif Najmi



Afiqah Mizan

Award 2017 after making Uniten's Dean's List for five consecutive semesters.

"I will continue to work harder to earn a degree and maybe pursue a master's degree one day.

"I always tell myself not to give up. There are other people with more challenges.

"When I face difficulties, I take a breather and carry on," said Mira Adila, who was born and raised in Sungai Besar, Selangor.

The sixth of seven siblings, Mira Adila hopes that her life story will inspire others like her.

YSD Governing Council Member Tan Sri Wan Mohd Zahid Mohd Noordin said YSD is one of the few foundations that offers diverse scholarships to wide sections of the society, covering underprivileged and differently abled students.

It also offers scholarships to deserving, accomplished students under YSD's core pillars — environment, community and health, sports, and arts and culture.

"I hope Afiqah's research will further contribute to YSD's efforts in rehabilitating degraded forest areas and Orangutan habitats," he said.

This year, YSD has offered RM16.7 million in scholarships and bursaries to 356 Malaysian students, out of which 65 per cent are for 295 underprivileged students.

Another 29 students with outstanding academic achievement are awarded excellence scholarships worth RM4.5 million to pursue pre-university and undergraduate studies at top universities in Malaysia, the United Kingdom and China.

YSD is also awarding RM1.3 million worth of scholarships to 32 vocational students to pursue diplomas in nursing, physiotherapy and laboratory medical technology at Ramsay Sime Darby Healthcare College.

This year, YSD's collaboration with Yayasan Peneraju through the Peneraju Tunas Potensi — the YSD Bursary Programme — will kick off with YSD awarding bursaries worth more than RM5.5 million to 119 underprivileged Bumiputera students.

The programme includes a bridging programme where students will have the opportunity to brush up on their communication

skills in the English language and develop other soft skills.

Among the recipients of the Peneraju Tunas Potensi - YSD Bursary Programme is Branden Earnest Azman, 21. Hailing from the Lundayeh minority group in Sabah, Branden lost his parents when he was a child.

His grandfather, who worked as a paddy farmer, brought up Branden until he died in May. Branden is being supported by his brother, an oil palm estate worker.

Branden was accepted to continue his tertiary education at University Malaysia Sabah's School of International Tropical Forestry last year.

Another talented but underprivileged student, Wong Kie Ming, 23, from Sarawak, received the Sudirman Scholarship from YSD.

YSD, in collaboration with The Actors Studio, offered the scholarship to commemorate 25 years since the passing of Malaysian entertainment icon, Sudirman.

Wong is pursuing the Bachelor's Degree in Vocal Performance programme, with a focus on opera singing, at University of Malaya and hopes to pursue his master's in the same discipline.

YSD is also awarding five scholarships worth more than RM520,000 to five researchers from Universiti Putra Malaysia to pursue their master's and postgraduate studies in research areas that promote sustainable palm oil and agricultural practices, and renewable energy.

The scholarships are awarded under the YSD-UPM Collaborative Postgraduate Scholarship Programme, where 30 research scholarships worth RM3 million will be awarded to UPM postgraduate students over the next five years to pursue research that could have a potential long-term impact on palm oil and agricultural industries worldwide.

Under the education pillar, YSD has awarded scholarships worth more than RM260 million to 3,573 students both in and outside Malaysia.

This includes support amounting to more than RM27 million towards research and public advocacy on education development as well as initiatives which aim to reduce gaps in access to quality education between urban and rural societies and to improve access to basic education for the marginalised.