

Falling Walls Lab AIMST (Malaysia) 2019

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Universiti Teknologi PETRONAS

**'Breaking the Wall of CO₂ Capture in
Greenhouse Gases'**

European labs visited: Max Planck Institute (MPI)
of Colloids and Interfaces at Potsdam, Germany



Dr. Maisara Shahrom binti Raja Shahrom is a postdoctoral researcher at the Centre of Research in Ionic Liquids (CORIL), Universiti Teknologi PETRONAS, Malaysia. She graduated her PhD in Science majoring in Chemistry from Universiti Teknologi PETRONAS in 2017. Her research is focusing on capturing carbon dioxide (CO₂) in natural gas using Amino Acid Polymerized Ionic Liquids (AAPILs). She is the representative from Malaysia in Falling Walls Lab Berlin and was awarded EUR 600 from EURAXESS ASEAN to enable her to visit any research institute in EU. She is currently the Co-Advisor for the American Chemical Society (ACS)- UTP International Student Chapter and member of Royal Society of Malaysia (RSC) and ACS.

Can you describe your experience competing in the Falling Walls Lab Finals in Berlin? What impressed you most?

Being a Malaysian representative in the Falling Walls Lab Finals in Berlin was really a great experience for me. To win a ticket to Berlin and to join the Falling Walls Berlin was really a dream come true. The thing that I loved most was the networking atmosphere among the finalists and the chance to exchange ideas and to learn about the other participants' research. Because the topics presented were multidisciplinary I was able to learn from the presentations given by the 100 participants from around the globe.

You also took part in the Falling Walls International forum in Berlin. Can you describe this event for us? What were the highlights for you?

Each year on 9 November – the anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall – 20 of the world's leading scientists are invited to Berlin to present their current breakthrough research. In 15-minute-talks, researchers from all disciplines present their work in front of 700 international guests. It was a great opportunity

to learn and to meet the world's movers and shakers in science, business, and policy-making. Between each break, a new peer-learning platform called Braindate gave us the opportunity to learn from the experts present at Falling Walls Berlin. The other ASEAN finalists and I had a Braindate with George Verweyen, the Director of the DAAD office in Thailand. He shared with us how to get funded by German Research Foundation (DFG) with some tips and tricks on how to best apply. It was a really great sharing session.

What was the most rewarding aspect about your participation in the Falling Walls events?

Most rewarding for me was the opportunity to network with the participants. It was great to make new friends from ASEAN and the world. We supported each other and cheered for each other's presentations because at the end of the day, it is not about winning but about the experience, the new friendships and the networking opportunities. The programme prior to the event was also very helpful especially the research insight day at Freie Universität Berlin (FU Berlin) where we had the opportunity to get a deeper insight into the German research landscape, and to interact with leading scientists and representatives from both funding agencies and research institutions.

As EURAXESS Prize winner you also visited research labs in Europe. Can you tell us where you went and who you met?



I chose to visit the Max Planck Institute (MPI) of Colloids and Interfaces in Potsdam, Germany. I was hosted by Dr Majd Al-Naji, group leader of the Biorefinery and Sustainable Chemistry group at MPI. I had the opportunity to learn about a new research area and to visit an MPI lab. I also presented a talk about my own research to the researchers at MPI. It was a great discussion where we able to change ideas on

how our research areas complement each other.

Why did you pick this lab and what are your key takeaways from the visits?

The Max Planck Foundation is well-known in Germany. They operate a number of research institutes and conduct their research independently. The MPI Colloids and Interfaces Institute carries out research related to sustainable chemistry and ionic liquids which is related to my own research. It was a great opportunity for me to visit their lab so that we can improve ours. I am optimistic we can set up a collaboration between MPI and Universiti Teknologi PETRONAS.

What is next for you with regards to your career as a researcher?

I hope I will be able to contribute to my university by obtaining further awards and grants in research and development and through collaboration with other universities both in Malaysia and abroad. I would also like to see my research having an impact on society and the economy of Malaysia.

