



Working at IMS and living in Okazaki

Md Iqbal Mahmood (Postdoctoral Researcher)

Theoretical and Computational Molecular Science

Since 2018, I have had the privilege of working at the Institute for Molecular Science (IMS), part of the National Institutes of Natural Sciences (NINS) in Okazaki, Japan, as a member of Prof. Kei-ichi Okazaki's esteemed research group. Our work centers on molecular dynamics simulations, especially focusing on the membrane proteins, alongside various computational studies. This research is crucial for enhancing our understanding of biological processes and holds significant promise for biotechnological applications. By utilizing advanced computational tools and simulation techniques, we explore the structural dynamics and functional mechanisms of these proteins. This effort not only deepens our fundamental scientific knowledge but also has the potential to drive innovations in biotechnology. Under the guidance of my principal investigator, Prof. Okazaki, a brilliant scientist and a generous mentor, I have been able to successfully navigate the complexities of this field. Despite being a foreign researcher with language barriers, the supportive and collaborative environment at IMS has been incredibly accommodating. My PI and colleagues go out of their way to assist me, ensuring effective communication and fostering a productive research atmosphere. This inclusive environment has significantly contributed to my professional growth, making my work here immensely rewarding and fulfilling. Beyond research, Prof. Okazaki, along with secretary Chiba-san, Akaba-san, and Nagasono-san, provided invaluable support with visa and administrative issues, which greatly helped me. Their advice

on various aspects of life

in Japan has been instrumental in overcoming any difficulties I encountered. Engaging in research discussions, casual conversations, and occasional meals together at nearby restaurants with group members has provided refreshing breaks from the routine.

Residing in Okazaki City since 2018 has been a deeply enriching and pleasant experience. Okazaki, located in Aichi Prefecture, is a city that seamlessly blends historical significance with modern amenities. The city offers a rich cultural heritage, evident in landmarks like Okazaki Castle and the numerous traditional festivals that celebrate its storied past. Strolling or cycling through Okazaki is one of my pleasures, with charming destinations like Minami Park to the south and the picturesque Okazaki Castle and Otogawa River to the north, offering delightful pathways for exploration. I love exploring the markets and festivals frequently that are often held in the green spaces throughout the city. The NINS campus features a beautiful landscape, with each season—spring, summer, autumn, and winter—providing a unique and picturesque view. Whenever I need to refresh myself with some fresh air, I enjoy taking a walk around the campus and its surroundings. I'm actively engaged in the NINS badminton and futsal clubs, relishing every moment of play. These clubs not only offer a chance to indulge in my passion for badminton and futsal but also serve as a platform for fostering friendships and cultural



exchange. Additionally, the Rotary Club hosts an annual BBQ event specifically tailored for foreign researchers, presenting a valuable occasion to mingle with fellow academics and immerse myself in the vibrant community of Okazaki. The city of Okazaki is special to me because I learned to drive at Okazaki Driving School

and got my license there. The people are welcoming, the research is cutting-edge, and the city itself is simply charming.

Love the peace and natural beauty of Okazaki

Vikas Singh Chauhan (Specially Appointed Researcher)
Department of Photo-Molecular Science

I joined Prof. Kenji Ohmori's group in December 2021. Currently, I am a member of the quantum gas experimental team in the group. We create the Bose Einstein Condensate (BEC) and load it into a 3-dimensional periodic potential to create a Mott Insulator Lattice (MI). I was very excited when I first saw the coldest place of the universe, namely the BEC in the lab. Over the course of two and a half years, I have learned a lot of experimental techniques and increased my knowledge of understating my topic of interest with the help of talented researchers in the group. The activities such as the weekly group meeting, team meeting, and journal clubs in the group provide opportunities for frank discussions and interaction with other members of the group. These activities have helped me to quickly solve my own problems faced during the week's work and to understand the works of other group members. In addition, the weekly Python and electronic club helps us to sort out the problems related to coding or electronics.

Apart of the research staff, there is also the group of administrative teams. There is a separate administrative team for each task, making things smoother for the staff.

For me, the combined group of researchers, stu-

dents and administrative team is like a family where I can discuss other things apart from the research.

Okazaki city is a city located in central Japan. It is a peaceful place with abundant nature. I am enjoying living in Okazaki city. On weekends, I like to take a walk around the Oto river and relax. Okazaki Castle reminds me of the cultural rich history of Okazaki city and Japan. It is also exciting for me to see the neighboring cities of Nagoya and Hamamatsu. The beautiful cherry blossoms are always my most awaited event every year.

