



Space program dream now a reality for student set to work on Japan Mars probe

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Updated Sat 12 Jul 2014, 12:17am

Bagus Nugroho is on his way to the Japanese city of Chofu where he will join a one-month research program with the Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA).

During his time in Japan, the 30-year-old student will be part of a three-person research team working on the supersonic parachute required during the landing procedure of a Mars probe.

"Due to the nature of the landing that will be very fast, a supersonic parachute is needed to make sure the probe can land safely," Bagus said.

The probe will collect data about the minerals and materials in Mars that might provide insight into the red planet's atmosphere and climate, and maybe even clues to past life forms.

Mars exploration has been a major focus for space agencies around the world, including NASA's famous robotic rover, Curiosity, which landed in August 2012.



PHOTO: Bagus will be part of a three-person research team working in Japan. (ABC)

MAP: Japan



PHOTO: Wind tunnel at Chofu Aerospace Center in Japan. (JAXA)

Bagus came to Australia from his home in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, in 2002 to take part in a foundation program before going on to university.

His PhD in fluid mechanics at the University of Melbourne is focused on ways of reducing 'drag', or friction, on aircraft.

In Japan, Bagus will work alongside two other researchers using a supersonic wind tunnel machine to help their investigation.

He says the wind tunnel might be very different to the machines he is familiar with.

"As we will be using the supersonic wind tunnel, I believe the nature of the research will be very different compared to my usual work. I am very excited to learn about this."

Bagus has been a long admirer of planes and space exploration.

"I've always been interested in space flight and at that time I was just wandering about JAXA's website when I came across this opportunity.

"I think it was the last day of the application when I decided to apply, and thankfully I was chosen."

Topics: space-exploration, science-and-technology, japan, indonesia, australia, asia

First posted Sat 12 Jul 2014, 12:04am