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Dual-site mixed layer-structured $FA_xCs_{3-x}Sb₂I₆Cl₃$ Pb-free metal halide perovskite solar cells†

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Structure engineering of trivalent metal halide perovskites (MHPs) such as $A_3Sb_2X_9$ (A = a monovalent cation such as methyl ammonium (MA), cesium (Cs), and formamidinium (FA) and $X = a$ halogen such as I, Br, and Cl) is of great interest because a two dimensional (2D) layer structure with direct bandgap has narrower bandgap energy than a zero dimensional (0D) dimer structure with indirect bandgap. Here, we demonstrated 2D layer structured FACs₂Sb₂I₆Cl₃ MHP by dual-site (A and X site) mixing. Thanks to the lattice-symmetry change by I–Cl mixed halide, the shortest ionic radius of Cs, and the lower solution energy due to dual-site mixing, the $FACS₂SD₂l₆Cl₃$ MHP had 2D layer structure and thereby the MHP solar cells exhibited improved short-circuit current density.

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Recently, metal halide perovskite solar cells (MHP SCs) have been paid great attention because of their unique properties such as high absorptivity due to direct bandgap, long charge carrier diffusion length, small exciton binding energy, convenient bandgap tunability, and solution processability. Since Kojima et al. reported a liquid junction $\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{PbX}_3$ (MAPbX₃, $X = I$ or Br) MHP-sensitized solar cell,¹ intensive studies have been carried out to develop highly efficient MHP SCs.²⁻⁸ Accordingly, the record efficiency of a Pb-based MHP SC reached over 25% under 1 sun conditions (AM1.5G 100 mW cm^{-2}).⁹ Although the MHP SCs have great potential in applications such as flexible solar cells, building integrated photovoltaics, vehicle integrated photovoltaics, and portable power generators, the Pb in the MHP SCs causes big problems for finding applications for human-friendly power generators.¹⁰ PAPER

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Hence, it is big challenging to develop efficient and stable Pb-free MHP SCs. The researches of Pb-free MHP SCs can be roughly classified to divalent metal (Sn and Ge)-based and trivalent metal (Sb and Bi)-based MHP SCs.¹¹ For instance, Hao *et al.* reported on a 5.7% MASnBr_xI_{1-x} MHP SC composed of Fdoped tin oxide (FTO)/blocking TiO₂ (bl-TiO₂)/mesoporous TiO₂ $(m\text{-TiO}_2)/\text{MHP}/2,2',7,7'$ $[N,N-di(4-methoxyphenyl)]$ amino]-9,9'-spirobifluorene (spiro-OMeTAD)/Au.¹² Recently Jokar et al. obtained 9.6% FASnI₃ MHP SCs with improved stability by introduction of guanidinium iodide and ethylenediammonium diiodide.¹³ Heo et al. reported that the phase stability and durability of all inorganic CsSnI₃ MHP SCs can be

improved by addition of SnBr₂.¹⁴ Krishnamoorthy et al. reported AGeI₃ (A = Cs, MA, and FA ((NH₂)₂CH)) MHP SCs.¹⁵ However, the divalent metal (Sn and Ge)-based Pb-free perovskite materials have suffered from their quick oxidation to Sn^{4+}/Ge^{4+} in air atmosphere.¹⁶

In contrast, the trivalent metal (Bi and Sb)-based MHP SCs with $A_3M_2X_9$ (A = Cs, MA, and FA, M = Sb and Bi, X = Cl, Br, and I) crystal structure exhibit good air and thermal stability.¹⁷–¹⁹ However, the $A_3M_2X_9$ MHP SCs have zero dimensional (0D) dimer structure and two dimensional (2D) layer structure. For example, Harikesh et al. reported that the formation energies of dimer and layer structure are -12.80 eV and -12.70 eV for $Cs_3Sb_2I_9$ and -12.40 eV and -12.65 eV for $Rb_3Sb_2I_9$ so that the $Cs_3Sb_2I_9$ and $Rb_3Sb_2I_9$ make dimer structure and layer structure, respectively.²⁰ Similarly, Correa-Baena et al. reported that $Cs_3Sb_2I_9$, $Rb_2Sb_2I_9$, and $K_3Sb_2I_9$ have dimer structure with indirect bandgap, layer structure with direct bandgap, and layer structure with indirect bandgap so their power conversion efficiencies (PCEs) are 0.03 , 0.76 , and 0.07% , respectively.²¹ Jiang *et al.* reported that the dimer structured $MA_3Sb_2I_9$ is changed to the layer structured $MA_3Sb_2I_{9-x}Cl_x$ by partial substitution of I to Cl.²² Umar et al. also reported that the dimer structured $MA₃Sb₂I₉$ can be changed to the layer structured $MA₃Sb₂I_{9-x}Cl_x$ by HCl treatment.²³ So far, the bandgaps of $A_3Sb_2X_9$ perovskite materials have been narrowed by structure change from dimer to layer structure owing to the X site mixing of I and Cl. Here, we investigated if the bandgap of layer structured $A_3Sb_2I_6Cl_3$ mixed halide perovskite is controllable by A-site binary mixing of MA, FA, and Cs. Through the systematic studies on the effect of A-site binary mixing on its bandgap, we could find a layer structured $FACS₂Sb₂I₆Cl₃$ perovskite with narrower bandgap than the $MA₃ Sb₂I₆Cl₃$ perovskite. In addition, we explained how the dual-site (A-site and X-site) mixed

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Fig. 1 (a) UV-visible absorption spectra: inset = photographs of the MHP films, (b) Tauc plots, and (c) XRD patterns of MA₃Sb₂I₉, MA₃Sb₂I₆Cl₃, and FACs₂Sb₂I₆Cl₃ MHP films.

FACs₂Sb₂I₆Cl₃ perovskite has layer structure and relatively narrow bandgap by density functional theory (DFT) calculation. To screen what binary combinations of A-site in $A_3Sb_2I_{9-x}Cl_x$ mixed halide perovskite can make narrower bandgap than the $MA₃Sb₂I₆Cl₃$ or $Cs₃Sb₂I₆Cl₃$ perovskite material with \sim 2.4 eV of bandgap energy, we measured UV-visible absorption spectra and photographs of the $A_3Sb_2I_{9-x}Cl_x$ mixed halide perovskite films as shown in Fig. S1(a)–(d).† Apparently, the $A_3Sb_2I_{9-x}Cl_x$

Fig. 2 Lattice structures of (a) MA₃Sb₂I₉ (P6₃/mmc), (b) MA₃Sb₂I₆Cl₃ (P3m1), and (c) FACs₂Sb₂I₆Cl₃ (P3m1). Pink/brown/light gray/mint/light brown/green/purple spheres represent H/C/N/Cs/Sb/Cl/I respectively.

Table 1 Calculated lattice structures, volume per formula unit (FU), and calculated band gap with spin orbital coupling (SOC) and without SOC

mixed halide perovskite films had more red-shifted absorption spectra (Fig. S1(a)–(d)†) than the $A_3Sb_2I_{9-x}Br_x$ perovskites (Fig. S1(e) and (f)[†]). This implies that the $A_3Sb_2I_{9-x}Cl_x$ mixed halide perovskite films have 2D layer structures and the $A_3Sb_2I_9$ x_rBr_r perovskites have 0D dimer structures. From the screening experiments, we chose the $FACS_2Sb_2I_6Cl_3$ perovskite material for further studies because it has the most red-shifted absorption spectrum as shown in Fig. S1(c).†

To compare optical properties of the previously reported dimer structured $MA_3Sb_2I_9$ and layer structured $MA_3Sb_2I_6Cl_3$ and the A-sited mixed $FACS_2Sb_2I_6Cl_3$, we measured UV-visible absorption spectra in Fig. 1(a) and plotted corresponding Tauc plots in Fig. 1(b). The inset photographs in Fig. 1(a) indicate that the $MA_3Sb_2I_9$, $MA_3Sb_2I_6Cl_3$, and $FACS_2Sb_2I_6Cl_3$ films have yellow, orange, and brown in color, respectively. The Tauc plots in Fig. 1(b) indicate that the bandgaps of $MA₃Sb₂I₉$, $MA₃Sb₂I₆Cl₃$, and $FACs₂Sb₂I₆Cl₃$ films are 2.25 eV, 2.18 eV, and 2.0 eV, respectively. To check crystal structures of the MHP films, we measured X-ray diffraction (XRD) patterns of the $MA_3Sb_2I_9$, $MA_3Sb_2I_6Cl_3$, and $FACS_2Sb_2I_6Cl_3$ and plotted the simulated XRD reference peaks of $Cs_3Sb_2I_9$ P6₃/mmc 0D dimer structure, of which the $Sb_2I_9^{3-}$ dimers share their triangular faces and form isolated structure,^{17,24} and $Cs_3Sb_2I_9$ $P\overline{3}m1$ 2D layer structure, of which the A-site cations act as spacers between the corner-sharing $\text{Sb}_2 \text{I}_9^{\,3-}$ octahedra,^{17,24} as shown in Fig. 1(c) and 2. Similarly to the UV-visible absorption spectra, the $MA₃ Sb₂I₆Cl₃$ and $FACs₂ Sb₂I₆Cl₃$ exhibited layer structures, whereas the $MA₃Sb₂I₉$ had dimer structure. There were no additional peaks of impurities such as FACl, CsCl, and $SbI₃$ in the XRD patterns. This indicates that the layer structured MHP films are formed by dual-site mixing.

To understand the thermodynamic origins of dual-site mixing induced phase stabilization for the layered structures, we adopted density functional theory (DFT) using the Vienna ab initio simulation package (VASP).25,26 Details of DFT calculations are summarized in the ESI Section.†

Fig. 3 Band structures (left panel) and projected density of states (PDOS) of (a) $MA_3Sb_2l_3$ ($P6_3/mmc$), (b) $MA_3Sb_2l_6Cl_3$ (P3m1), and (c) $FACs_2$ - Sb_2 ^I₆Cl₃ (P3m1). Valence band maximum energy is set to 0. Spin orbit coupling is included during the calculation. Calculated band gaps are underestimated than those of experimental values. (d) Solution energy changes by A-site mixing of $FA_xCs_{3-x}Sb_2l_6Cl_3$. The dotted lines are connecting the lowest energy states and dispersed symbols represent individual calculation result to obtain optimum lattice structures.

Optimized lattice structures for $MA_3Sb_2I_9$ (P6₃/mmc), MA_3 - $Sb_2I_6Cl_3$ ($P\bar{3}m1$), and $FACs_2Sb_2I_6Cl_3$ ($P\bar{3}m1$) are expressed in Fig. 2 and Table 1.

Band structures and density of states (DOS) are represented in Fig. 3(a–c). The 2D layer structured perovskites $(P\bar{3}m1)$ exhibit a more direct band gap like feature comparing with the 0D dimer structured perovskites $(P6_3/mmc)$. The calculated band gaps of the perovskites with and without spin orbital coupling (SOC) are summarized in Table 1. The $FACS₂Sb₂I₆Cl₃$ ($P\bar{3}m1$) shows the smallest band gap regardless of SOC considering. The band gap narrowing by I–Cl mixed halide perovskites is attributed to the change of the lattice symmetry, i.e., the phase change from $P6_3/mmc$ to $P\overline{3}m1$.^{17,22,27} The reduced band gap for the FACs₂Sb₂I₆Cl₃ ($\overline{P_3}$ m1) can be explained by its shorter bond length than the other perovskites. The volume per formula unit (FU) of $FACs_2Sb_2I_6Cl_3$ ($P\overline{3}m1$) is the smallest even though their lateral dimension is slightly larger than $MA_3Sb_2I_6Cl_3$ ($P\overline{3}m1$) as listed in Table 1. The ionic radius of Cs is the shortest among Cs, MA, and FA so that the volume of $FACS₂Sb₂I₆Cl₃$ can be the smallest. Accordingly, we can think that the $FACS₂Sb₂I₆Cl₃$ has the shortest bond length due to its smallest volume.

The role of A-site binary mixing on the stabilization of 2D layered structure is investigated by calculating solution energies as shown in Fig. 3(d). The solution energies of layered structures are smaller than those of dimer structures. The $FACS₂Sb₂I₆Cl₃$ $(P\bar{3}m1)$ has only 28 meV FU⁻¹ of solution energy, which can be spontaneous reactions considering the contribution of configurational entropy.28,29 The DFT calculations clearly show that the dual-site mixing on A and X in $A_3Sb_2X_9$ perovskite can be an efficient way to improve the stability of 2D layer structure and band gap modulation.

To check thermal properties of the dual-site mixed $FACS₂$ - $Sb₂I₆Cl₃$ MHP film, we checked thermal gravimetric analysis (TGA) thermogram and differential scanning calorimetry (DSC) as shown in Fig. 4(a) and (b). Here, we prepared the $FACs_2Sb_2$ - $I₆Cl₃$ MHP powder by mixing 1:2:2 molar ratio of FACl : CsCl : SbI₃ instead of mixing $1:2:1:1$ molar ratio of $FAI : CsI : SbI₃ : SbCl₃$ because the $SbCl₃$ is more easily sublimed than the SbI_3 . The corresponding XRD patterns in Fig. S2† indicate that both samples have layered structures. The TGA and DTA (differential thermal analysis) spectra in Fig. 4(a) and $S3\dagger$ indicate that the FACl and $SbI₃$ begins to be

Fig. 4 (a) Thermogravimetric analysis (TGA) spectra of FACl, SbI₃, CsCl, CsI, FAI and FACs₂Sb₂I₆Cl₃ MHP powder, (b) differential scanning calorimeter (DSC) spectra of FACs₂Sb₂I₆Cl₃ MHP powder, and (c) energy disperse X-ray spectroscopy (EDS) elemental mapping and spectra of $FACS₂Sb₂l₆Cl₃ MHP film.$

decomposed at \sim 200 °C, whereas the CsCl starts to be decomposed at \sim 700 °C. The prepared FACs₂Sb₂I₆Cl₃ MHP powder begins to be decomposed at \sim 230 °C. This implies that the perovskite phase is formed by mixing of 1 : 2 : 2 molar ratio of $FACl : CsCl : SbI₃$. The weight% of $FACl : CsCl : SbI₃$ in $FACs₂$ - $Sb₂I₆Cl₃$ is 5.67 : 23.67 : 70.66 so the FACl and $SbI₃$ are decomposed at 230-420 $^{\circ}$ C and the CsCl is decomposed over 420 $^{\circ}$ C. The higher decomposition temperature of prepared MHP powder at $150-300$ °C than the pure FACl and the lower decomposition temperature of the powder at > 420 °C than the pure CsCl confirms that the new interaction bonding of FA-I and Cs–I is formed by formation of perovskite phase because

their decomposition temperatures are FACl < FAI and CsI < CsCI in Fig. 4(a). Some I in the SbI_3 might be replaced with Cl so its composition might be $SbI_{3-x}Cl_x$. Therefore, The FACs₂Sb₂I₆Cl₃ MHP powder might show an inflection point at \sim 310 °C. The DSC spectrum in Fig. $4(b)$ shows that the synthesized FACs₂- $Sb_2I_6Cl_3$ MHP powder begins to be decomposed at \sim 230 °C, which is consistent with the TGA result.

Fig. 4(c) is energy dispersive X-ray spectroscopy (EDS) elemental mapping and spectrum of the synthesized $FACs₂$ - $Sb₂I₆Cl₃$ MHP powder. The Cl, Sb, Cs, and I elements were well dispersed in the EDS elemental mapping image so we can think that the perovskite phase is created. However, the EDS spectrum

Fig. 5 (a) Ultraviolet photoelectron spectroscopy (UPS) spectrum of FACs₂Sb₂I₆Cl₃ MHP film, (b) energy band diagram of MHP SC, (c-f) representative SEM cross-sectional image of MHP SC (c) and SEM surface images (d–f) of FTO/bl-TiO₂/m-TiO₂/MHP ((d) MA₃Sb₂I₉, (e) MA₃-Sb_{2l6}Cl₃, and (f) FACs₂Sb_{2l6}Cl₃), and (g-i) photovoltaic properties of MHP SCs: (g) current density-voltage curves, (h) EQE spectra, and (i) stabilities of mesoscopic MA₃Sb₂I₉, MA₃Sb₂I₆Cl₃, and FACs₂Sb₂I₆Cl₃ MHP SCs and planar FACs₂Sb₂I₆Cl₃ MHP SC.

indicates that the formed $FACS₂Sb₂I₆Cl₃$ MHP powder is halide deficient because the molar ratio of $Cs : Sb : I : Cl$ was 1.80 : 2.00 : 6.14 : 1.23. This might be attributed to the heattreatment of the $FACS₂Sb₂I₆Cl₃$ MHP powder at 200 °C for 5 min under nitrogen atmosphere or the oxidation of SbI₃. The UV-visible absorption spectra of the heat treated $FACs_2Sb_2I_6Cl_3$ MHP films at 110 °C, 150 °C, and 200 °C for 5 min under N_2 atmosphere and photographs of corresponding films were shown in Fig. $S4(a)$.† This clearly shows that the film is slightly darken by heat-treatment at 200 \degree C and its on-set absorption band edge is also slightly red-shifted. Their corresponding XRD patterns in Fig. S4(b)† indicate that their crystalline structures are maintained to 2D layer structure irrespective of heattreatment temperature. The slightly narrowed XRD peaks by heat-treatment indicate that their crystallinities are slightly improved.

The electronic structure of synthesized $FACS₂Sb₂I₆Cl₃ MHP$ film was analyzed by ultraviolet photoelectron spectroscopy (UPS) spectrum as shown in Fig. 5(a). The zoom-up UPS spectra confirm that the onset photoemission and valence band edge is 16.25 eV and 1.50 eV, respectively. Therefore, a calculated valence band maximum (VBM) energy $(E_{VBM} = hv - E_{\text{cut-off}} +$ $\Delta E_{\rm VB}$, where $h\nu = 21.22$ eV for He I, $E_{\rm cut-off} = 16.25$ eV, and $\Delta E_{\rm VB}$ $= 1.50$ eV) of the FACs₂Sb₂I₆Cl₃ MHP film is -6.47 eV. The calculated conduction band minimum (CBM) energy is 4.47 eV because its bandgap is 2.0 eV in Tauc plot. The band energy diagram of the TiO₂ electrode based $FACS₂Sb₂I₆Cl₃ MHP$ SC was shown in Fig. $5(b)$. The mesoscopic TiO₂ based MHP SC was composed of FTO/bl-TiO₂/m-TiO₂/MHP/PTAA/Au. A representative SEM cross-sectional image of mesoscopic $TiO₂$ based MHP SC was shown in Fig. 5(c). The SEM surface of $MA₃Sb₂I₉$, $MA_3Sb_2I_6Cl_3$, and $FACS_2Sb_2I_6Cl_3$ film on $m-TiO_2/bI-TiO_2/FTO$ substrate were shown in Fig. 5(d–f), respectively. The current density-voltage $(J-V)$ curves of mesoscopic $MA_3Sb_2I_9$, MA_3Sb_2 - I_6Cl_3 , and $FACS_2Sb_2I_6Cl_3$ MHP SCs in Fig. 5(g) indicate that the dual-site mixed $FACS_2Sb_2I_6Cl_3$ MHP SC have the highest PCE than the other MHP SCs. A short-circuit current density $(J_{\rm sc})$, open-circuit voltage (V_{oc}) , fill factor (FF), and PCE of FACs₂- $\mathrm{Sb}_2\mathrm{I}_6\mathrm{Cl}_3$ MHP SC was 2.88 mA cm^{-2} , 0.59 V, 61.6%, and 1.05% at 1 sun condition. Their photovoltaic parameters were summarized in Table 2. Average photovoltaic properties of 16 samples for each device were shown in Fig. $S5.\dagger$ The FACs₂- $Sb₂I₆Cl₃$ MHP SC did not show significant J-V hysteresis with respect to the scan direction as shown in Fig. S6.† Their external quantum efficiency (EQE) spectra were shown in Fig. 5(h). Although their PCEs are still very poor, it is clear that the dual site-mixed $A_3Sb_2X_9$ MHP SCs have 2D layer structure and narrower bandgap. To check the stabilities of $MA₃Sb₂I₉$, **Paper**
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Table 2 Summary of photovoltaic parameters of mesoscopic MA₃Sb₂I₉, MA₃Sb₂I₆Cl₃, and FACs₂Sb₂I₆Cl₃ MHP SCs

Device	$J_{\rm sc}$ (mA cm ⁻²)	$V_{\rm oc}$ (V)	FF(%)	PCE $(\%)$
$MA_3Sb_2I_9$ $MA_3Sb_2I_6Cl_3$	0.162 0.51	0.40 0.42	55.0 47.9	0.03 0.10
$FACS_2Sb_2I_6Cl_3$	2.88	0.59	61.6	1.05

 $MA₃Sb₂I₆Cl₃$, and $FACS₂Sb₂I₆Cl₃$ MHP SCs, we tracked the maximum power points (MPPs) of un-encapsulated devices for 60 min under continuous light soaking at 1 sun as shown in Fig. 5(i). This clearly shows that the $FACS₂Sb₂I₆Cl₃$ MHP SC has good stability.

Conclusions

In summary, we could synthesize 2D layer structured $FACS₂$ - $Sb₂I₆Cl₃$ perovskite with narrower energy bandgap by dual-site mixing. The narrower bandgap of $FACS₂Sb₂I₆Cl₃$ perovskite than the 0D dimer structured $MA₃ Sb₂I₉$ and the 2D layer structured $MA_3Sb_2I_6Cl_3$ is attributed to the phase change from $P6_3/mmc$ dimer structure to $\overline{P3}m1$ layer structure due to the change of lattice symmetry by I–Cl mixed halide and the shorter bond length than the others due to the shortest ionic radius of Cs among Cs, MA, and FA. Consequently, the dual-site mixed $FACS₂Sb₂I₆Cl₃$ MHP SCs exhibited higher PCE of 1.05% at 1 sun conditions than the dimer structured $MA₃Sb₂I₉$ MHP SCs and the layer structured $MA₃Sb₂I₆Cl₃ MHP SCs.$

Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts to declare.

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