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BRAC Onnesha launch on June 2

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BRAC founder Sir Fazle Hasan Abed yesterday inaugurated the ground station of "BRAC Onnesha", the nation's first nano-satellite made by BRAC University. Researchers said the ground station, set up on the roof of BRAC University's building no. 4 in the capital, was now ready to communicate with the satellite. BRAC Onnesha, a cube measuring 10cm along its edges and weighing about one kg, will be launched to the International Space Station (ISS) by SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket from Florida, the US, on June 2. Khalilur Rahman, an associate professor at BRAC University and the project's adviser, told the media that the ground station was the main operating centre and would download information from the satellite.

The station is capable of receiving topographical data gathered by the satellite once it is put into a low earth orbit at an altitude of around 410km, passing over Bangladesh four to six times every day.

BRAC University researchers will analyse and interpret data taken in the form of high-quality photographs, observe the space environment, and help serve academic and research goals. The ground station will also receive audio signals and can be used for communication during any emergency.

A replica of BRAC Onnesha was presented to Sir Abed by the ground station team on the occasion. During the inauguration of the ground station, Sir Abed, also chairperson of the board of trustees of BRAC University, said: "We need to utilise the huge potential of students in Bangladesh. The government has to come forward to lend support to such research."

"Many countries spend 3 per cent of their GDP on research. But Bangladesh employs less than 1 per cent of its GDP for that purpose. The country will benefit if the government spends at least 1 per cent of its GDP on research," he added.

He also said that the invention of the BRAC University would open up a new horizon and encourage other universities to carry out such research projects to help the nation. "Brain drain is still going on from our country. Many brilliant students drive taxis in foreign countries because they don't get the right things here. We must retain them. They are our resources and we need to utilise them," he added. Wishing the researchers of BRAC University success, Sir Abed said: "We'll remain ahead of others." Earlier, on February 8, BRAC University became the first Bangladeshi educational institution to get its own nano-satellite, developed and

assembled by three of its students who used the technology and facilities of a Japanese university.

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