

## Onion emergency in Bangladesh

21st November, 2019



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Onions are very important in Bangladeshi cuisine. The vegetable is a staple in the country's cooking. However, many people are finding it difficult to buy onions. There is a shortage of them, which means prices

have rocketed. Many Bangladeshis simply cannot afford to buy onions. Bangladesh traditionally imports onions from its neighbour India. Recent heavy monsoon rains in India damaged a lot of India's onion harvest. This has made India ban exports to Bangladesh. The price of one kilogram of onions in Bangladeshi markets has risen from US36 cents to around \$3.25. This is nearly a ten-fold increase. Bangladesh's opposition party has called for nationwide protests over the record prices.

The onion crisis is so serious that even the Prime Minister has stopped using it in her cooking. Sheikh Hasina Wazed said she is using onion alternatives in her dishes. A limited number of onions are on sale in several Dhaka markets at twice their usual price. Hundreds of people queue for hours to buy just one kilo. A 41-year-old English teacher said: "Even if I have to stand another two hours, I will do that. I can save some money. I have never seen onion prices this high." A Dhaka resident said a lot of people in her neighbourhood have stopped eating onions. She said: "It has been 15 days since I bought one kilo of onion." Many street-food sellers can no longer make their onion-based snacks.

Sources: [theguardian.com](http://theguardian.com) / [dawn.com](http://dawn.com) / [bdnews24.com](http://bdnews24.com)

### Writing

Onions are the best vegetables in the world. Discuss.

### Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

onions / cuisine / vegetable / cooking / import / Bangladesh / India / opposition / crisis / dishes / on sale / queue / one kilo / two hours / money / 15 days / snacks

### True / False

- a) Onions are a staple in Bangladeshi cuisine. T / F
- b) The article said Bangladesh is importing onions from Iran. T / F
- c) The price of onions has increased nearly ten-fold in Bangladesh. T / F
- d) The opposition party in Bangladesh has asked people to protest. T / F
- e) Bangladesh's Prime Minister is still cooking her meals using onions. T / F
- f) Some onions are on sale in markets in Dhaka for double the usual price. T / F
- g) A Dhaka resident said she hadn't bought onions in over two weeks. T / F
- h) Street-food sellers still have enough onions to make their snacks. T / F

### Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- |                        |                   |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>1. cuisine</b>      | a. scarcity       |
| <b>2. shortage</b>     | b. nibbles        |
| <b>3. damaged</b>      | c. emergency      |
| <b>4. increase</b>     | d. ruined         |
| <b>5. protests</b>     | e. substitutes    |
| <b>6. crisis</b>       | f. wait in line   |
| <b>7. alternatives</b> | g. rise           |
| <b>8. queue</b>        | h. local          |
| <b>9. resident</b>     | i. food           |
| <b>10. snacks</b>      | j. demonstrations |

### Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think of onions?
- b) How important are onions in your country's cuisine?
- c) How would you describe the taste of onions?
- d) What can you do with onions in cooking?
- e) How unhappy would you be without onions?
- f) What would you do if food prices rocketed?
- g) What do you know about Bangladeshi food?
- h) Are people right to protest in the streets about onion prices?

## Phrase Match

- |  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| 1. Onions are very important                     | a. shortage of them       |
| 2. The vegetable is a staple in                  | b. in her neighbourhood   |
| 3. There is a                                    | c. over the record prices |
| 4. Recent heavy monsoon                          | d. her dishes             |
| 5. nationwide protests                           | e. the country's cooking  |
| 6. she is using onion alternatives in            | f. onion-based snacks     |
| 7. A limited                                     | g. usual price            |
| 8. twice their                                   | h. in Bangladeshi cuisine |
| 9. a lot of people                               | i. rains in India         |
| 10. street-food sellers can no longer make their | j. number of onions       |

## Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- What alternatives are there to onions?
- What is your favourite onion dish?
- Are onions best raw or cooked?
- How long would you queue for food?
- What food could you not live without?
- What is your favourite street food?
- What questions would you like to ask a Bangladeshi?

## Spelling

- Bangladeshi euicnsi
- The vegetable is a plstea in the country's cooking
- There is a oerahstg of them
- Bangladesh traditionally mosiptr onions
- damaged a lot of India's onion rteahsv
- Bangladesh's onoiptiosp party
- The onion crisis is so iusoser
- she is using onion anevitesaltr
- A dmltej number of onions are on sale
- Hundreds of people eueuq for hours
- A Dhaka esrnitde
- make their onion-based nsaskc

### Answers – Synonym Match

1. i	2. a	3. d	4. g	5. j
6. c	7. e	8. f	9. h	10. b

## Role Play

### Role A – Onions

You think onion is the best vegetable. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their vegetables. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): potatoes, corn or garlic.

### Role B – Potatoes

You think potato is the best vegetable. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their vegetables. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): onions, corn or garlic.

### Role C – Corn

You think corn the best vegetable. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their vegetables. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): potatoes, onions or garlic.

### Role D – Garlic

You think garlic the best vegetable. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their vegetables. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): potatoes, corn or onions.

## Speaking – Vegetables

Rank these with your partner. Put the best at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- |            |                    |
|------------|--------------------|
| • onions   | • broccoli         |
| • potatoes | • pumpkin          |
| • garlic   | • sweet corn       |
| • carrots  | • Brussels sprouts |

### Answers – True False

a	T	b	F	c	T	d	T	e	F	f	T	g	T	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.