

### ***Staff reporter***

BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia left Dhaka for Saudi Arabia last to perform Umrah at the invitation of the Saudi government.

The BNP chief is scheduled to fly from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in a flight of Emirates Airlines around 9pm, her press secretary Maruf Kamal Khan Sohel told.

Khaleda, also a former Prime Minister, will perform Umrah as a royal guest of the Saudi government as she does every year, he said.

Apart from some family members of the BNP chief, her press secretary Maruf Kamal, personal assistant Shamsur Rahman Shimul Biswas her Middle East affairs adviser Enamul Haque Chowdhury and photographer Nuruddin Ahmed will accompany Khaleda during her visit.

Khaleda goes to Saudi Arabia every Ramadan to perform Umrah and pass the last days of the holy month there in special prayers.

She is expected to return home on July 25.

“The BNP chairperson will return home after observing the holy Lailatul Qadr in Saudi Arabia and will observe the holy night here, too,” Maruf Kamal said.

Party sources said BNP senior Vice Chairman Tarique Rahman along with his family members, now in London, is also likely to go to Saudi Arabia to perform Umrah during the period, apparently to meet his mother after a long time.

According to the sources, Tarique and Khaleda will discuss various crucial issues like party overhaul, strategy for the post-Eid movement and party's council.

Khaleda's younger son Arafat Rahman Koko, his wife and two daughters, now in Malaysia, will also go to Saudi Arabia to meet Khaleda, turning the tour a Zia family reunion after nearly seven years.

Following the 111 political changeover, Khaleda and his two sons -Tarique and Koko-- were arrested on various graft charges.

Later, Tarique was sent to London for treatment while Koko to Thailand.

The then army-backed caretaker administration had also forced her out of her Cantonment House and reportedly tried to send Khaleda abroad but failed due to her strong stance on staying in the country under any circumstances.

Khaleda met Koko in Singapore in 2012 and also met Tarique the same year in London. But they could not meet all together since the 2007 political changeover. So, it will be the first reunion of the family if they all finally meet Saudi Arabia.