claim that Ziaur Rahman was the first president," commented a senior BNP leader.

But Tarique's claim that his father was the first president has triggered a widespread controversy. It had provided the AL and the government with a deadly political weapon to use against the BNP. Amid such a situation, Tarique, who has been living in London for more than five years, came up with another startling claim on April 8, saying



Sheikh Mujibur Rahman became the prime minister "illegally" in newly independent Bangladesh in 1972. This claim exposed his ignorance about the history of Bangladesh. His claim is completely false and imaginary.

Many independent political analysts criticised Tarique for such ridiculous remarks. Tarique's preposterous remarks came at a time when the AL and the government were supposed to face scathing criticism for widespread vote rigging in the upazila parishad elections. It has also exposed the dysfunctional state of the Election Commission and real face of the politicised civil administration.

Tarique established the infamous Hawa Bhaban as an alternative power centre during the past BNP-led government. He and his cohorts had run the Bhaban, defaming and tainting the government largely by their numerous unlawful and corrupt activities. At that time, some BNP MPs who at the BNP parliamentary party meeting in June 2002 demanded that Tarique was given a senior post in the party had also forced the parliamentary party to take a resolution urging then President AQM Badruddozza Chowdhury to quit the presidency.

Yet, the way Tarique toured the country as the senior joint secretary general to organise the BNP had energised the party grassroots. But when Hawa Bhaban's dark episode was unveiled during the emergency regime, Tarique as portrayed by a US embassy diplomatic cable became as a symbol of "kleptocratic government and violent politics" in Bangladesh.

In the confidential cable sent on November 3, 2008 to Washington, James F Moriarty, the then US ambassador, even recommended blocking his entry into the United States. The embassy believed Tarique was "guilty of egregious political corruption that has had a serious adverse effect on US national interests", namely the stability of democratic institutions and US foreign assistance goals.

Tarique however was made the all powerful senior vice-chairman of the BNP in a council in December 2009, in a move apparently designed to smooth his path to the party helm. In the council, this post was created for Tarique by amending the party charter. Another provision included in the party charter now says Tarique will lead the party in the absence of the chairperson.

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