They were saying this keeping in mind that Speaker Abdul Hamid would be elected as the new President. In their views, Hamid had acceptability, and if Hamid, after getting elected, takes any move to overcome the political standoff, it might succeed. Even some political analysts were speaking about the formation of an election time interim government-led by Hamid after his election to the presidency.

Hamid has been elected as the president on the nomination of the ruling Awami League. It has been appreciated by many political analysts and civil society personalities. But the hope that was kindled has disappeared over time. What did Hamid do when he acted as the president since March 14, following President Zillur Rahman's illness?

Between June 18 of 2012 and March 28 of 2013, two significant events took place to expose the bankruptcy of Bangladesh politics.

On June 18, the then Speaker Abdul Hamid, in a ruling said that High Court Judge AHM Shamsuddin Choudhury Manik had violated the constitution by making derogatory remarks about the parliament and the Speaker.

"I doubt if a conscientious person can make remarks like the ones an honourable High Court judge [Justice Manik] has made about parliament and me by violating Article 78 (1) of the constitution," Hamid said in the ruling.

Putting the onus on the chief justice, the Speaker said, "We will support whatever steps the chief justice may take with regard to such behaviour by a court. Hopefully, that will prevent a recurrence of such incidents."

During a court hearing on June 5, Justice Manik observed that the Speaker had committed an offence tantamount to sedition by commenting in parliament on an HC order. He said the Speaker was completely ignorant of the apex court and the constitution.

Hamid on May 29 told the House that courts were neutral and independent. However, it looked odd when they took quick decisions to resolve their own problems while people waited for years to get justice.

Hours after Justice Manik's remarks, some senior lawmakers of the ruling alliance said in the parliament that the judge had violated the constitution by making the remarks about the Speaker.

They proposed adopting a resolution requesting the president to form a Supreme Judicial Council to remove the judge. Then the Speaker came up with the ruling, honouring the MPs' sentiments.

Justice Manik remained in the High Court division as a judge until he got a new appointment. On March 28 of 2013, Hamid, when he was acting as the president, appointed four judges– Justice Manik and three others– to the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court. The appointment drew criticism. Why did Hamid, being the acting president, do it? And why did the government make him to do so? Was it a test for Hamid whether he was loyal to the prime minister or not? What could have happened had Hamid disagreed to appoint Justice Manik as a judge to the Appellate Division? Had he refused to appoint Justice Manik as a judge to the Appellate Division, would it have annoyed the prime minister? And would the premier have changed her mind and dropped Hamid as her choice for the presidency?

All the signs suggest that the country is heading towards a grave political crisis centring the next parliamentary election. Amid such a situation, what can the newly elected president do to save the country from plunging into an abyss, especially at a time when the politicians appear to act like sworn enemies?

His predecessors Abdur Rahman Biswas, Iajuddin Ahmed and Zillur Rahman could not uphold the dignity of Bangabhaban, the office-cum-residence of the president. Their numerous actions have undermined the image of the presidency.

Rahman Biswas and Iajuddin had moved to hold talks with political parties in early 1996 and at the end of 2006 to break the political standoff. But they failed as they could not exert their influences on the parties; rather they had reportedly towed the line of the party that nominated them for presidency.

The way the situation is sharply deteriorating, the newly elected President may have to take steps to open talks with the political parties to save the country from plunging into a political turmoil. If such a situation prevails, Hamid will have to quickly set his priority right--whether he will act only according to the advice of the party that nominated him or if he will do whatever he deems right for the welfare of the country.

Be that as it may, we welcome the new President to Bangabhaban and wish him success. ■