

# Speakers shed light on the kind of Pakistan Jinnah wanted

By Anil Datta

I think we've let down our country. Mr Jinnah didn't deserve what we've done to him.

These views were expressed by Yasser Latif Hamdani, a high court advocate and the author of the book, "Jinnah: myth and reality", while speaking at the launch of the "Jinnah Anthology: fourth edition", at a local hotel on Thursday evening.

"Jinnah did not want a Pakistan where it was the prerogative of the state to decide as to who was a Muslim and who was not. He would not have wanted a country where Aasia Bibi would have faced humiliation and persecution just because of her faith," Hamdani most emphatically asserted.

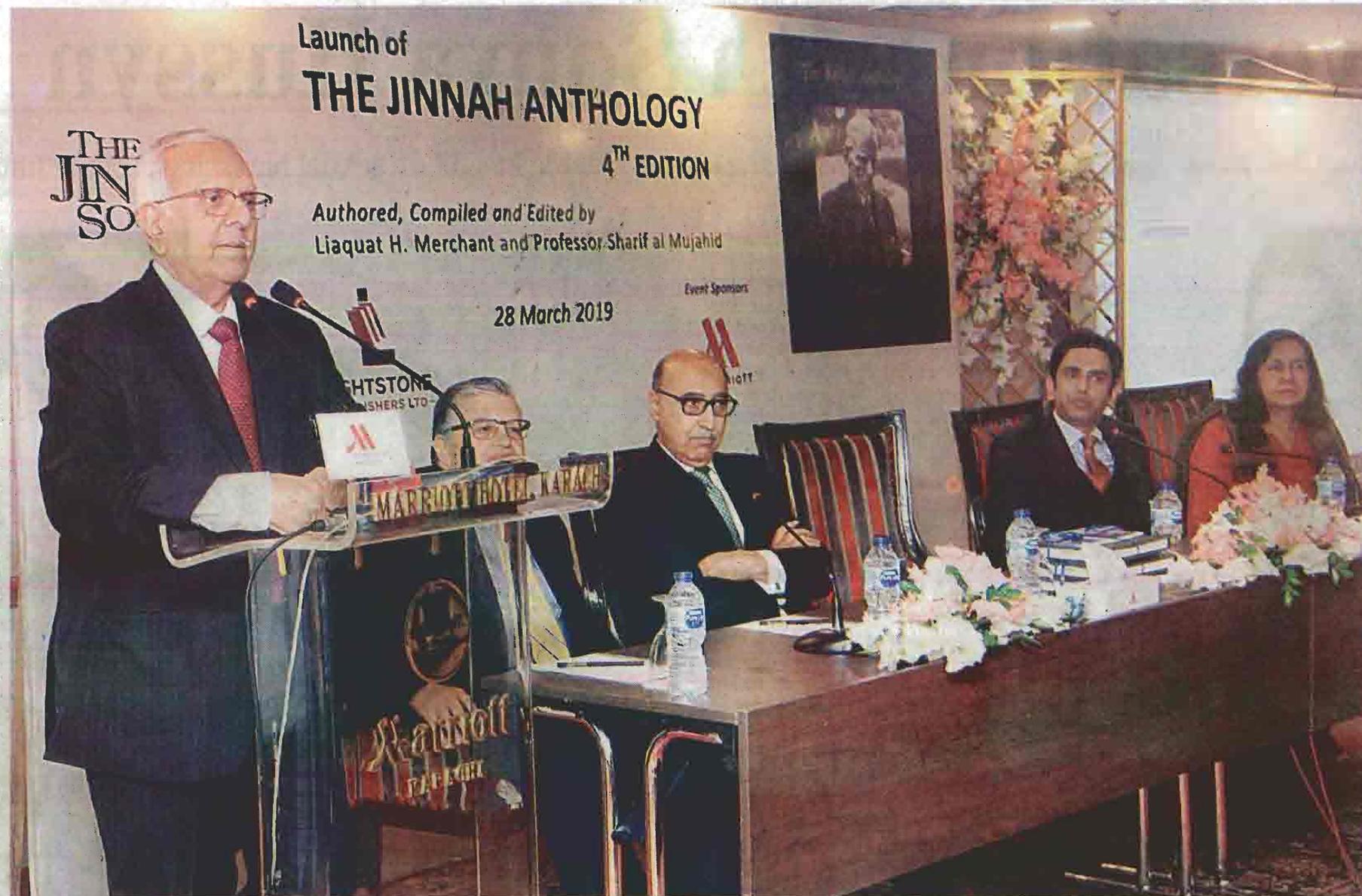
As a matter of record, he reminded the participants that Mr Jinnah's first cabinet after independence was pluralistic, one cabinet member being a Hindu and the foreign minister being an Ahmedi even though he was quick to clarify that at that time the Ahmedis had not been declared a minority.

He said that his interest in Mr Jinnah and his work grew after he watched the movie, Gandhi, in which Mr Jinnah had been demonised. He said that Jinnah was trying to come to a compromise in right earnest between the two communities.

Hamdani credited the Quaid with the establishment of the Dehradun Military Academy and recalled his single-handed efforts in the reforms whereby Indians could get the King's Commission as officers in the armed forces.

Up until a few decades ago, almost all the high command of the Pakistan Army were graduates of Dehradun. "We need to have a civilian democratic order," Hamdani said.

Earlier, Liaquat Merchant, president, Jinnah Society, a barrister, a former deputy-attorney-general of Pakistan, and a grand nephew of Mr Jinnah's, as the opening speaker of the function, said that initially, Jin-



Liaquat Merchant, the president of Jinnah Society, speaks at the launch of 'Jinnah Anthology: fourth edition' at a hotel on Thursday — The News photo by Naqeeb Ur Rehman

nah was referred to as the ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity. He said people criticised the two-nation theory. "However, if you tune in to the Indian TV channels and see the stance of the media, you'll at once decide for yourself whether Partition was good or a bad thing," he said while referring to the virulent anti-Pakistan stance of the Indian media. The creation of Pakistan, he said, gave Muslims a chance to propagate their faith and live by its tenets.

"We all must take pride in the fact that we are the masters of our own destiny," he said.

Dr Sikander Hayat, distinguished professor of history at Lahore's Forman Christian Col-

lege (FC College) University, said, "The launch of the anthology speaks volumes for the warmth people feel for their leader, the Quaid."

The book, he said, contained a wide variety of records, personal reflections on his life, along with his judicial pronouncements. "This is no ordinary feat, collecting of material, compilation, and editing," he said.

He lauded Professor Sharif al Mujahid for the essays on Jinnah in Section 1 of the book. He also lauded reproduction of the essays by Wolpert on Jinnah, Nehru, Gokhale and Gandhi. He lauded historian Ayesha Jalal for her incisive

writings on Jinnah. He credited Liaquat Merchant with "subjective objectivity".

Former Pakistan high commissioner in India Abdul Basit said, "While the Quaid left us soon after the country's inception, we did not do his memory justice, as a result of which we are having to grapple with multifarious problems."

He said that developed countries were struggling to sustain their paramouncy while developing countries like Pakistan were trying to get into the class of developed countries. "Thus, while countries are cooperating, they are also in a strife, in confrontation that is jeopardising the world

order."

He mentioned the latest US position on the Israel-occupied Golan Heights in this context. Pakistan which he said, was a large, nuclear country, had an international debt to the tune of \$100 billion, and exports were a puny \$22 billion per year.

"We have a democratic deficit in Pakistan," he said and added that Pakistan had failed to nurture civilian institutions, which, he said, was our biggest challenge.

Secondly, he said that there was a knowledge deficit, because for the first two hundred years of the Muslim period, the Muslims got too bogged down

in the metaphysical aspects of the sciences which took them away from natural sciences.

Thirdly, he mentioned the economic stagnation which, he said, had created a circular debt of Rs1.4 trillion.

Fourthly, he said there was the cultural conundrum as to whether we were to be a secular or a theocratic country. Finally, he said, there was the dilly-dallying in foreign policy.

Ameena Saiyid, OBE, secretary-general of the Jinnah Society and former managing director, Oxford University Press (Pakistan), paid a tribute to the late Stanley Wolpert for his incisive writings on Mr Jinnah and termed his demise

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a major loss.

She traced the inception and achievements of the society. She narrated her encounter with Dina Wadia, Mr Jinnah's daughter in New York and on her stubborn refusal to talk about her father. She gave a light, humorous angle to it.

She also narrated her trip to Mr Jinnah's residence on Malabar Hill in Mumbai and, pointing to the ignorance of the common man there, said that her cab driver did not know who Mr Jinnah was or the whereabouts of his residence were. She also quoted Indian author Nirad Chaudhry's tribute to Mr Jinnah.