



BOB SKLAR/staff photographer

Taher Rasheed praised state Rep. Jan Dolan at the dinner meeting.

# India's ambassador visits Hills

By Bob Sklar  
staff writer

Democracy and secularism are two of India's greatest resources, the Indian ambassador to the United States declared in a visit to Farmington Hills Saturday.

Addressing members and guests of the 35-family Dawoodi Bohra mosque, Al-Masjidul Burhani, 20959 Orchard Lake Road, during a dinner meeting, ambassador P.K. Kaul said: "We are an example of democracy."

"We have demonstrated to the world that more than the number of people who live in the United States have voted in any (national) election in India. We have demonstrated our commitment to live in a democratic government."

India, which legislated a democratic constitution in 1949 after gaining independence from Great Britain two years before, is the world's most populous democracy.

Stressing India's religious freedom, Kaul said: "We firmly believe in this doctrine, this strength. We have demonstrated to the world that secularism can bind 800 million people together and can take the country forward."

Kaul's appearance coincided with the celebration of the 77th birthday of Dr. Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin, spiritual leader of 1 million Ismaili Muslims of the Dawoodi Bohra sect, and the 41st anniversary of the Republic Day of India (Jan. 26).

"It's a matter of great satisfaction to be here," said Kaul, who came from Washington, D.C., in the company of U.S. Secret Service agents.



## cultural collage

A page of Farmington-area ethnic news

"WE HOPE you visit us often to give us guidance in how to prosper and live with friends of all cultures, all walks of life," said West Bloomfield resident Taher Rasheed, bustling with pride over the mosque.

Farmington Hills was chosen for the Dawoodi Bohra's first mosque in the Western Hemisphere because of the religious sect's concentration of followers within five miles of the city.

Dr. Burhanuddin — His Holiness to followers — came from Bombay to bless the Farmington Hills mosque when it opened last June during his third visit to the United States.

Earlier, he provided a grant to help the congregation's president, Nooruddin Yarnani of Livonia, kick off fund-raising for the \$400,000 prayer hall.

Kaul, 61, held various government posts before becoming ambassador the United States 3½ years ago.

Urging Al-Masjidul Burhani congregants to commit themselves to public service in the United States, Kaul said: "You must not give any impression that you only will benefit from the place you are living. You must also give back."

Kaul also urged congregants to re-

member their homeland. Noting the rising literacy rate, improved food harvest and growth in industry, he cited investment opportunities in India's revitalized economy.

ON BEHALF of congregants, Farmington Hills resident Badrudin Rangwala said, "We are proud to be here. Farmington Hills is a city very modern in its thinking."

In a letter, incoming Farmington Hills Mayor Terry Sever wished the congregation a "fruitful and productive" year ahead. Outgoing Mayor Jody Soronen, who attended, wished congregants "health, happiness and prosperity" for 1989.

Taher Rasheed described newly elected state representative Jan Dolan of Farmington Hills as a woman who has "helped us maintain our religion, our culture, our values." Dolan, also on hand, called her friendship with the congregation "very interesting and rewarding."

Considered a small sect of the Muslim religion, Dawoodi Bohra be-

lieve are based on the teachings of the Fatemi Imams 888 years ago; a Fatemi Imam founded Cairo, Egypt, in 969 A.D.

His Holiness was raised and taught in the Fatimi philosophy of literature, art and economics. He followed his father as leader of the sect and is the religion's 52nd Imam in the Fatimi tradition.

His sect prides itself on allegiance to discipline, education, tolerance, generosity, piety, moral values, patriotism, and law and order.

It also makes interest-free loans to followers for homes, businesses, and cars because it doesn't believe in "the evils of interest."

## clarification

A Farmington focus item Monday said the closest retail center to the planned new Halsted Village at 12 Mile and Halsted is on Orchard Lake Road. The Kendallwood Plaza is a mile closer, at 12 Mile and Farmington Road.

The Oakland Parks Foundation-sponsored Winter Family Fun Day scheduled for Sunday, Jan. 15, at Glen Oaks County Park in Farmington Hills has been cancelled because of the weather.

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BOB SKLAR/staff photographer

P.K. Kaul (left), Indian ambassador to the United States; Nooruddin Yarnani, Al-Masjidul Burhani president; and Taher Rasheed, Farmington Hills resident, listen to dinner meeting proceedings Saturday night.

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