

Blunkett's Indian-Jewish party

CURRYING FAVOURS

by Justin Cohen

HOME secretary David Blunkett has called on moderate Muslims to speak out against suicide bombings in Israel and around the world.

The beleaguered minister's comments came last week in an exclusive interview with Jewish News, one of his last before he became engulfed in newspaper accusations concerning his ex-lover, Kimberley Quinn.

Blunkett said: "People need to have the courage to speak not just outside but within the community to give strength to those who are fearful, and often need to be able to say we are part of the solution if we are not the problem."

Blunkett's call came following a reception in his honour organised by the Indian Jewish Association. Addressing the gathering at Mishcon de Reyza solicitors, he insisted the Jewish and Hindu populations boasted a common commitment to family and education, adding: "I think it is inspirational to see people not seeing themselves as victims but as being able to grab hold of the opportunity provided."

He also insisted the communities had shown there was no need to be assimilated in the sense of people having



A garlanded David Blunkett at the reception

photo: DAVID KATZ

to all be the same, but you can understand the critical nature of the way in which learning a language and understanding the ways of the culture you come into, can help you contribute to that culture rather than being swallowed by it."

During his speech, in which he described how some Indian food had "rebounded" on him during a recent trip there, a garlanded Blunkett joked that Chanukah and other religious

festivals should be made into public holidays.

He said: "I know from all my connections with good Jewish friends just how wonderful a time can be had, even when people are feeling melancholy, and in the Jewish community there is always a good excuse for a really good dinner. All the most wonderful women I know have no qualms at all about being equal as well as good Jewish mamas and cooks."

Course breaks new ground

UNDERGRADUATES on the Indian subcontinent could soon be taking part in the region's first Jewish studies programme.

Plans for the ground-breaking initiative were outlined by the Indian-Jewish association. Several thousand pounds have already been raised through the association's new Ghandi-Einstein fund.

The programme is the brainchild of LSE professor Dr Gautam Sen, who is now seeking additional financial backing and the agreement of a university to host the programme from next October.

John Levy, co-chairman of the association, said: "There has never been a Jewish and Hebrew studies programme, so this will be a totally new departure for this vast subcontinent."