

# War of words with publisher

By FREDERICA DELAILOMALOMA

THERE WAS a war of words between Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry and a senior journalist at a media function last night.

The launching of the Media Code of Ethics by the Media Council drew a small crowd of media representatives and executives.

Chaudhry claimed there was no truth in a story [*see below*] written by Robert Keith-Reid of *Islands Business*.

When Keith-Reid yelled out from the audience that the story had come from a reliable sources, Chaudhry told him he (Keith-Reid) was suffering memory lapse.

The majority of the crowd left immediately after Chaudhry's speech.

President of the Pacific Island News Association William Parkinson expressed grave concern on issues raise in Chaudhry's speech against *The Fiji Times*.

"[Chaudhry's] attacks against the media were draconian to say the least. We have not had these threats made since the military government in 1987, and as a member of the Fiji media I'm very concerned," Parkinson said.

Chaudhry said the code of ethics was a positive indication that the media had recognised the need for a blueprint to provide a measure to gauge standards.

His speech left many stunned.

Amid jeers from parts of the audience during his speech, Chaudhry said the onus was on the industry to enforce discipline and sound journalistic practice.

□ *Fiji Times*, 27 October 1999

□ *In an editorial in its November issue, Islands Business responded: "In view of [Chaudhry's] dictatorial assertions and virulently anti-media attitudes so nakedly displayed at such an early stage of his prime minister-ship, a question to ask now is: Has he already blown it?"*

approached the President to appoint a Fijian as Prime Minister, he sent them away with the advice that they cooperate with the Government. This was reported by the media at the time.