

Advert causes political stir

By Cecilia So.

NEWSPAPERS have the right to express support for individual chief executive candidates — as long as they do not attack rival nominees, academics say.

Their remarks followed a front-page advertisement in a Chinese-language newspaper yesterday that used a photo of chief executive front-runner Tung Chee-hwa to promote a new financial column.

It read: "Mr Tung, we support you", although the newspaper stressed the ad-

vert did not reflect its editorial position.

Joseph Man Chan of the Department of Journalism and Communication at the Chinese University said a newspaper was within its rights to express its support for a particular candidate.

"As long as the paper does not take the position to hide the candidate's weaknesses and to damage other candidates intentionally, it is not wrong for the paper to express its position," he said.

Robert Stone, assistant professor at the same department, said he was not

surprised at seeing a local newspaper expressing its support for a particular political figure.

"This is a common practice in the Western countries," he said.

Choy Chi-keung, lecturer in the Division of Social Studies of the City University, feared the newspaper's credibility could be at risk if the advert really represented its position.

But he said the advert could be for commercial purposes only and it could be too early to analyse its implications for the media.