

Govt pays a local firm 3.5 million patacas to conduct poll on press, broadcasting laws

Ian Sio Tou

Government Information Bureau (GCS) Director Victor Chan Chi Ping said yesterday that the government will pay a locally-based polling company about 3.5 million patacas to garner public opinion on whether or not the city's press and broadcasting laws should be amended.

Chan said the government would use methods that it believed to be transparent, scientific and fair to gauge public opinion on the existing press and broadcasting laws that have been in place for two decades.

He made the remarks during a press conference in the GCS premises, which was called to introduce ERS Solutions (Macao) Limited that won a public tender to conduct the survey.

During the press conference, ERS Solutions presented its team to media company representatives and reporters.

The government was "absolutely open" to all opinions from the public on the issue, such as whether or not a press council and a broadcasting council should be set up and how to position the so-called new media, including the Internet, Chan said.

Even though the two councils were supposed to have been set up



Government Information Bureau (GCS) Director Victor Chan Chi Ping addresses yesterday's press conference held at his bureau.

Photo: Ian Sio Tou

about 20 years ago, when the press and broadcasting laws were originally promulgated, both never got off the ground.

"Any issues related to the two laws are open to discussion," Chan said, adding the aim was to better protect press freedom and freedom of expression."

Chan also said he believed that ERS Solutions would use "scientific, just and transparent" methods in gathering public opinion.

During the press conference, Angus Cheong Weng Hin, director of the company, said that his team would conduct the research between this month and next Au-

gust, including literature analysis, case collection and deliberative polling (DP) on the public and journalists.

According to the timetable provided by the company, the team will submit its report in August next year in line with its one-year service contract with the government.

Cheong said that his team would also poll 2,000 residents by random sampling with computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI). Cheong also said that 200 to 300 of the 2,000 residents will participate in a group discussion, as well fill out follow-up questionnaires. Some journalists would be also invited to take part in the deliberative polling.

The concept of deliberative polling was devised by Prof. James Fishkin of Stanford University in 1988, the characteristics of which include a random, representative sample of the general public polled on its targeted issues. After the baseline poll, members of the sample are invited to discuss the issues over a weekend in a prearranged venue, according to Fishkin's website.

Chan said earlier this year that the whole process of assessing the feasibility of amending the two laws would take up to three years. ■