

Hearings on price setting to be more transparent

China's top economic planner began on Monday to solicit public opinions on a revised draft regulation aimed at improving the transparency of public hearings on price setting.

The number of consumers is required to be no less than one third of the total attendance in a public hearing on price setting, according to the revised version released on the website of the National Development and Reform Commission on Monday.

The current regulation has no lower limits on the share of consumers in a public hearing on prices.

In addition to a price setting plan, a report on the cost of prices is also demanded from the price fixer, which is newly added to the regulation.

The draft regulation also states for the first time public hearings must allow media coverage and the presence of observers.

Government staff who neglect their duty, abuse power or cheat in the organization or proceeding of the hearings will be punished, with criminal penalties for those serious cases, said the draft.

"The public hearing system for prices has played a big role in making the government's decision making on prices more scientific, democratic and transparent," said the commission. "But it has also exposed some problems in practice as it is a new thing in China and needs improvement."

China started to carry out its first regulation on public hearings on price making in 2001, which stipulated that prices of electricity, railway and flight tickets, among others, like should be determined after a hearing. The latest revised version would solicit public opinions till July 23.

Beijing held a public hearing on July 2 on the cost of the city's new metro linking the city proper with the airport. A hearing was also held on charging over plastic bags in supermarkets after China decided to ban free plastic shopping bags on June 1.

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