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Abode plan for workers by Denmark

By DAPHNE CHENG

DENMARK is considering a scheme to offer key Hongkong employees of Danish companies work permits and certificates to stay in the country, the Danish Consul-General, Mr Claus Juul Nielsen, said.

Mr Nielsen said the Danish Government was studying the scheme with the aim to secure the two types of permits for local people working in Danish companies if they were to be transferred there.

However, he added the scheme would not be a nationality package as beneficiaries would not be entitled Danish passports.

"It is not a passport scheme. It is a question of having guarantee of work permits and permits of stay," Mr Nielsen said.

He said Danish immigration legislation was strict and changes would not be easy to give foreigners Danish passports.

To apply for permanent residency, one had to live in Denmark for at least four to five years and be certified as able to speak Danish, Mr Nielsen said.

He said the Danish parliament had to approve each applicant.

Mr Nielsen said there were more than 30 Danish companies in Hongkong but it was not known at this stage how many people would benefit from the scheme.

He said the Danish Government started looking at the idea to offer work permits and permits of stay for Hongkong people last autumn.

Under the proposed arrangement, Hongkong employees of Danish companies would have to meet certain criteria before they could be granted the permits.

He said the permits would be valid as long as they were still employed by the companies.

This would allow employees to work and stay in Denmark, if they asked to be transferred to the head offices in the country.

Mr Nielsen declined to speculate how long it would take before the package could be approved.

"We are looking for a pragmatic way to implement the scheme. We have to see whether we can use existing laws, if not, we will have to set up new legislation.

"If we have the legislation, we still have to consider how we should design the scheme," he said.

Mr Nielsen said the plan to offer permits to Hongkong people was partly driven by Britain's call on the international community to help solve the territory's confidence crisis.

But he added the main concern was the Danish interests in Hongkong.

Mr Nielsen said the idea had been raised with Legislative Councillors.