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Abode campaigner in Govt role switch

By Wilson Wong

A GOVERNMENT official who has become deeply involved in the fight for right of abode has been given a new position.

Mr Peter Lai Hing-ling, currently Deputy Secretary with special duties in the Civil Service Branch, will replace Mr Joseph Wong Wing-ping as Deputy Secretary for Civil Service.

Mr Lai surprised many senior Government officials when he started attending meetings to brief union representatives about developments on the abode issue.

The Director of Administration, Mr Donald Tsang Yam-kuen; Deputy

There is nothing to do but sit and wait ... for the British government's decision on the right of abode issue

— Mr Peter Lai

Secretary for Civil Service, Mr Keith Shipley; and the Security Branch's principal assistant secretary Mrs Lessie Wei Chui Kit-yee, were also behind the abode campaign.

Mr Lai said yesterday the abode issue could only be resolved by the British government.

"There is nothing we can do except sit and wait," he said.

He declined to go into details of his work on the right of abode effort other than to say his role was to provide information about the civil service which the British government had asked for.

Whitehall has hinted

that an announcement on the issue will be made next month.

Besides providing information to the Home Office, Mr Lai was also responsible for an overall review of Civil Service Branch.

The review will be continued by his successor, who is yet to be chosen.

In his new role, Mr Lai will inevitably spend more time in the spotlight as his responsibility involves pay and conditions of service.

This means the annual civil service pay rise and fringe benefit issues will come under his jurisdiction.

Mr Wong said he would probably take up the new post as Deputy Secretary for Trade and Industry early next year after Mr Michael Cartland becomes the Director of Social Welfare.

The Government earlier announced that the present Director of Social Welfare, Mrs Elizabeth Wong Chien Chi-lien, would succeed Mr Brian Chau Tak-hay as Secretary for Health and Welfare next month.