

1997 BNO status defined by China

CHINA is attempting to remove uncertainties over the right of abode for Hongkong residents holding British Nationality Overseas (BNO) passports in 1997.

The Foreign Ministry's Hongkong and Macau Affairs Office deputy director Wang Guisheng said people with BNO passports would be regarded as Hongkong residents under the Special Administration Region (SAR) government in 1997.

But Wang said these residents would not be entitled to British protection or assistance as China would not acknowledge BNO passport status. As SAR residents of Hongkong, they would be subject to the laws and regulations of the region, he said.

BNO passport holders will be required to apply for SAR passports after the handover in 1997.

China is trying to obtain concessions for SAR passport holders similar to those currently available to people with BNO passports, who are automatically granted visa-free entry into a number of countries.

But China has adopted a firm stance on BNO passport holders who stand for the Legislative Council election in 1995. After 1997, they will be classified as foreigners.