

# HKSAR Government follows up on China's countermeasures against British Government's handling of issues related to British National (Overseas) passport

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) announced today (January 29) the non-recognition of the British National (Overseas) (BN(O)) passport as a valid travel document and proof of identity. With effect from January 31, BN(O) passports cannot be used for immigration clearance and will not be recognised as any form of proof of identity in Hong Kong.

The spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said earlier today that the United Kingdom (UK) paid no respect to the fact that Hong Kong has returned to China for 24 years and insisted on introducing a so-called "bespoke" policy for Hong Kong residents who hold the BN(O) status to reside and obtain citizenship in the UK. The act of the UK Government disregards China's solemn position and openly violates the British pledge. The UK has further expanded the scope of application of its so-called "bespoke" policy in an attempt to turn a large number of Hong Kong people into "second-class British citizens". The UK has completely altered the nature of the BN(O) passport. The so-called BN(O) passport mentioned by the UK now is no longer the BN(O) passport as originally understood by China and the UK. This move of the UK has seriously infringed on China's sovereignty and blatantly interfered in Hong Kong affairs and China's internal affairs. It has also severely violated international law and the norms governing international relations. China expresses strong indignation at and firm opposition to that. The spokesperson announced that with effect from January 31, China will no longer recognise the so-called BN(O) passport as a valid travel document and proof of identity and reserve the right to take further actions.

The HKSAR Government spokesperson said, "The Chinese and British Governments reached a consensus long ago on how to deal with the issue of Hong Kong residents holding BN(O) passports and exchanged memoranda on the understanding in 1984. In its memorandum, the UK clearly pledged not to confer the right of abode in the UK on holders of the BN(O) passport who are Chinese nationals in Hong Kong. The current move of the British side has substantively changed the nature of BN(O) passport, and is a fundamental violation of its pledge in its memorandum. As the UK breaches its commitment in the first place, it is legitimate for our Country to take countermeasures in response. The non-recognition of BN(O) passport as a valid travel document is in no conflict with the Chinese Government's commitment in its memorandum, as well as the explanations of questions concerning the implementation in the HKSAR of the Nationality Law of the People's Republic of China given by the

Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. The Central Government's adoption of the stance and policy in response to the UK's breach of commitment is a matter of foreign affairs and squarely within its prerogative. The HKSAR Government will fully follow up on the necessary measures for implementing the relevant policy."

Following the announcement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs today on the non-recognition of the BN(0) passport as a valid travel document and proof of identity from January 31 onwards, the HKSAR Government will take the following measures with effect from January 31:

1. BN(0) passport cannot be used for immigration clearance in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong residents concerned may continue to use their HKSAR Passports or Hong Kong Permanent Identity Cards for entering or departing Hong Kong;
2. BN(0) passport cannot be used as any form of proof of identity in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong residents concerned may continue to use their Hong Kong Permanent Identity Cards as proof of identity;
3. When passengers board flights for Hong Kong, airlines concerned must require Hong Kong residents concerned to present their HKSAR Passports or Hong Kong Permanent Identity Cards as proof;
4. Hong Kong permanent residents who are not of Chinese nationality and do not hold other valid travel document may apply to the Immigration Department for Document of Identity for Visa Purposes for international travel.

Since July 1, 1997, the HKSAR Government has been issuing HKSAR Passports to Hong Kong permanent residents who are of Chinese nationality under the authorisation by the Central Government. As at December 2020, the Immigration Department issued nearly 5.8 million HKSAR Passports which were still within their validity period. At present, holders of HKSAR Passport enjoy visa-free access to 167 countries and territories. The HKSAR Government will continue to lobby more countries or territories for granting visa-free access to holders of the HKSAR Passport for the travelling convenience of Hong Kong residents.

As for the possibly very few Hong Kong permanent residents who are not of Chinese nationality and who may only hold BN(0) passport but not any other valid travel document, they may apply to the Immigration Department for Document of Identity for Visa Purposes for international travel. After submission of application forms and fees, the Immigration Department will complete the processing of applications in five working days in general. Details on application for Document of Identity for Visa Purposes are available on the webpage of the Immigration Department at [www.immd.gov.hk/eng/service/travel\\_document/Application\\_for\\_HKSAR\\_Document\\_of\\_Identity\\_for\\_Visa\\_Purposes.html](http://www.immd.gov.hk/eng/service/travel_document/Application_for_HKSAR_Document_of_Identity_for_Visa_Purposes.html).

The spokesman solemnly pointed out, "This move of the British Government clearly uses the BN(0) passport or status which some people in Hong Kong

still hold for political maneuver on the pretext of providing a new route for relevant persons to reside and obtain citizenship in the UK. The hypocrisy of the British Government is also revealed by its lack of intent to confer the right of abode in the UK on people in Hong Kong as reflected in various amendments in its laws or policies long before Hong Kong's return to China. Since the introduction of the BN(0) passport, its holders have all along been subject to immigration control and limit of stay when travelling to the UK, and they are not allowed to work or study in the UK. Hong Kong residents who hold the BN(0) passport or status should discern the political intention of the British Government clearly."

"Apart from serving its political agenda, the move of the British side will also bring huge economic interests to the country. While the UK may be in dire need of talents and capital, it should not have made use of the BN(0) passport as a 'political cover-up'."