

MELBOURNE: Australia's Opposition immigration spokesman Scott Morrison says there are strong arguments for Australia in increasing its intake of refugees from Malaysia. Speaking to the Australian Associated Press (AAP) after four days in Kuala Lumpur where he met government officials, refugees and representatives from refugee groups, Morrison said it was impossible for Canberra to guarantee that the human rights of asylum seekers sent to Malaysia would be protected. The ability to put any protection in place on the ground . . . I think will be very problematic, he said yesterday. Whatever assurances are given, I just found real cynicism on the ground. In the proposed deal with Malaysia, Australia would send 800 asylum seekers, mainly boat people, to Malaysia in return for Canberra accepting 4,000 bona fide refugees. Prime Minister Julia Gillard had been quoted by AAP as saying that we've been clear all along that our arrangement with Malaysia would respect the human rights of the asylum seekers transferred, and we've been clear all along too that we would take 4,000 more refugees from Malaysia to Australia. - Bernama