

**Opposition to 'Malaysia solution' cause of boat death, says Aussie minister**  
**The Malaysian Insider**  
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**By Debra Chong**

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 2 — Australia's immigration minister linked yesterday's drowning of up to 27 refugees to opposition at home to the "Malaysia solution", the Sydney Morning Herald reported today.

Its minister Chris Bowen warned that more such boat deaths would occur if the controversial Canberra-Putrajaya deal continued to be held back but stopped short of openly blaming the Australian opposition's obstruction for the tragedy.

Seven people died after their boat sank off Indonesian waters last night, Australia's national news agency confirmed today.

The death toll is expected to rise with 20 more still reported missing.

"This is a terrible tragedy but it is a fact that, when you have more boats coming to Australia, you will see more deaths," the Australian daily cited Bowen as saying.

In a swap deal, Malaysia was to take in 800 asylum seekers and ship 4,000 confirmed refugees to Australia.

"We didn't adopt the Malaysia arrangement because it was politically easy or it was convenient, quite the opposite. We adopted it because we knew that this was the sort of arrangement that was necessary to avoid more deaths at sea, and that's exactly what we've seen," he said.

Bowen said another boat carrying 92 asylum seekers arrived off Christmas Island yesterday, and pointed out it was the sixth vessel since the policy shift to onshore processing.

But Australia's opposition argue the tragedy should not be used for political purposes.

Australia's minority government was forced to abandon its "Malaysia solution" inked in July after its opposition refused to pass a law in Parliament to overcome a High Court ban on the controversial people swap deal.

Malaysia's prime minister threw his weight behind his Australian counterpart Julia Gillard in Perth last week during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM).

Datuk Seri Najib Razak urged Australians to keep politics out of attempts to resolve the human smuggling problem, reminding them of the Christmas Island tragedy last December when an overcrowded boat carrying nearly 100 migrants struck rocks and saw dozens drown, including at least five children and three babies.

Gillard has vowed to take the "Malaysian solution" to Australia's polls.

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