

'We want no more hurtful statements'

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NEW YORK:

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said yesterday that Malaysia accepts Pope Benedict XVI's expressions of regret over the anger in the Muslim world triggered by the papal remarks which were deemed insulting to Islam.

The prime minister, who is also Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) chairman, nevertheless said the pope should refrain from making statements that could further infuriate Muslims.

"I think we can accept it and we hope there are no more statements that can anger the Muslims," he told Malaysian journalists covering his working visit here for the 61st session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Abdullah said when he mentioned the controversial papal comments in talks with US President George W. Bush

Abdullah meets Bush in New York before attending the UN General Assembly.



earlier, the American leader responded that he respected Islam and viewed it as a religion of peace.

"When I touched on the matter during our discussions just now, I noted that it sparked intense reactions because the one who uttered it was the pope himself," he said.

"The pope is not just any other person. That's why there has been much anger (on the part of Muslims)."

A wave of protest erupted among Muslims all over the world after Pope Benedict last

week implicitly linked Islam to violence and quoted a 14th century Byzantine emperor critical of Prophet Muhammad.

The pope later said he was "deeply sorry" for the outrage sparked by his speech at a German university, and stressed that the passages he quoted did not express his personal opinion.

However, some felt that the pontiff appeared to be saying he was sorry for the outrage but not necessarily the remarks themselves. — Bernama