

Headline **Pope seeks to start debate on condoms and AIDS**  
Date **24 Nov 2010**  
MediaTitle **The Star**  
Section **World**  
Journalist **N/A**  
Frequency **Daily**  
Circ / Read **304,904 / 1,026,812**

Language  
Page No  
Article Size  
Color  
ADValue  
PRValue  
**English**  
**W39**  
**110 cm<sup>2</sup>**  
**Black/white**  
**1,997**  
**5,991**



## Pope seeks to start debate on condoms and AIDS

**VATICAN CITY:** Pope Benedict XVI wanted to "kick-start a debate" when he said some condom use may be justified, Vatican insiders say, raising hopes and fears that the church may be starting to back away from its condom ban for its flock of one billion Catholics.

Benedict said in an interview that for some people, such as male prostitutes, using condoms could be assuming moral responsibility because the intent was to reduce infection.

The pope did not suggest using condoms as birth control, which is banned by the church, or mentioned the use of condoms by female prostitutes.

Theologians have long been studying the possibility of condoning such limited condom use as a lesser evil.

There were reports years ago that the Vatican was considering a document on the subject but opposition to any change has apparently blocked publication.

One Vatican official said on Monday he believed the pope just "decided to do it" and get a debate going.

For the deeply conservative Benedict, it seemed like a bold leap into modernity – and the worst nightmare of many at the Vatican.

The pope's comments set off a firestorm among Catholics, politicians and health workers that is certain to reverberate for a long time despite frantic damage control at the Vatican.

In a sign of the tensions within the Vatican, the Holy See's chief spokesman, the Rev Federico Lombardi, rushed out a statement to counter any impression that the church might lift its ban on artificial birth control.

Lombardi stressed that the pope's comment neither "reforms or changes" church teaching.

"The reasoning of the pope cannot certainly be defined as a revolutionary turn," he said. — AP