

Aussie official denies dog joke offended Chinese

CANBERRA (Reuter-Kyodo) Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans has snapped back at suggestions he insulted the Chinese on their practice of eating dog meat.

Evans was grilled in Parliament on Wednesday about remarks attributed to him at a reception in Hong Kong this week in connection with a missing pet dog belonging to the British colony's Governor Chris Patten.

"The governor's dog is probably a supreme delicacy. They'll turn it into hors d'oeuvres for (China's supreme

leader) Deng Xiaoping who, I'm told, eats four puppies a day," he was quoted as saying at the reception, where his remarks were overheard.

Challenged by Australia's conservative opposition on the grounds that his remarks were offensive to Patten and China, Evans said:

"I had no intention whatsoever of causing offense to the Chinese or for that matter the governor. I doubt very much that in the case of the Chinese any offense would have been taken."

Evans said the opposition had failed to grasp the cultur-

al gap between Australia and China on the dog meat issue.

It was a terrible insult in China to call someone a dog or to associate an individual with a dog, he told Parliament.

"It just happens to be the case by contrast that to say that someone eats dog is very likely to be regarded, particularly in Canton, particularly in Sichuan, as a compliment on that person's gourmet taste," Evans said.

"Because dog just happens to be a very sophisticated and highly regarded item of Chi-

nese cuisine, whatever we might think about that."

Evans said he had apologized to Patten "that the matter had got into public record in this way, completely misrepresenting the context of what I said and the substance of it."

"The Chinese, as we all know, have a marvelous sense of humor," Evans said.

"It is a sense of humor that is very easily recognizable to Australia and one of the things that enable Chinese and Australians to get on so well."

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