

# Garbage fee to be imposed soon

SHENZHEN will start to charge a garbage disposal fee from the first half of this year, Chinese-language papers quoted the local pricing authorities as saying Friday.

Each household inside the special economic zone will have to pay 13.5 yuan (US\$1.66) each month for garbage disposal and treatment, while businesses will pay 12.5 yuan for each ton of rubbish they produce. The latter rate is also applicable to both households and businesses in Bao'an and Longgang, according to the

authorities. This move is in line with the "polluters-pay" principle, which was stipulated in a national draft rule on pollution prevention, officials said.

The fee will be collected by the water supply group.

A number of other cities have imposed the fee, which ranges between three and eight yuan.

The municipal government has for several years been considering plans to charge garbage disposal fees. A public hearing on the subject was held two years

ago to set the standard charge.

Each city resident produces 1.2 kilograms of garbage each day on average, according to the latest statistics.

Garbage treatment and disposal costs are currently financed by the government.

The local government gave an assurance that the fee would not be a big burden for local firms, citing national statistics which showed the fee accounted for only 0.000073-0.2 percent of the output.

The pricing authorities said the fee would not become a financial burden for residents as it was only about 0.24 percent of their average income.

Zhu Yaohui, head of the garbage treatment center in Bao'an District, said the fee for residents inside and outside the special economic zone should be the same.

Bao'an and Longgang districts produce half of the city's total garbage, according to Zhu.

(Mu Zi)

# Aid center for children sought

Tang Li

EXPERTS on education, juvenile crimes and adolescent assistance are calling for the establishment of an adolescent assistance center for young vagrants in Shenzhen.

At a recent municipal work meeting, the experts described the critical situation faced by the city's young vagrants, which gives rise to juvenile crimes. They also pointed out that the present assistance center, where these children are currently living, cannot provide enough support to meet the children's educational and psychological needs.

"Although we set up a vagrant children support center in 2004, we still lack the facilities for children's growing up. A new assistance center dedicated to youngsters is in urgent need in Shenzhen," said Tang Rongsheng, head of the assistant center.

According to a report released at the meeting, the center helps around 2,000 vagrant children each year, accounting for only a small number of the total young vagrants in the city. Nearly 90 percent of these children are in poor physical condition, and many suffer from malnutrition, anemia, skin disease and mental illness.

Of those living in the center, 40 percent leave home due to poverty, another 30 percent are abducted and brought to Shenzhen, while the rest run away from home because of problems at home or at school. Many of the children are pressured by adults to commit crimes.

"If we do not invest on a juvenile assistance center, we might have to invest on a jail in the future. That will be a great tragedy for the society," said a speaker at the meeting.

The center has been trying to find vagrant children homes. Over the past two years, it has found homes for nearly 400 children.

## Expats share a 'Starry Night'

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Four "Star of Friendship" awards were given after a lucky draw. "I feel really lucky and happy," said Linton Rathgen, an English teacher from New Zealand, after receiving a crystal memento bearing the words "Star of Friendship."

"It's a very nice ball. I hope the government will hold more such activities for both Chinese and foreigners," said David Burgess, from the United States.

The organizers set up a donation box at the hall to collect funds for disabled children.

The event was hosted by the Foreign Affairs Office of the Shenzhen Municipal Government, Shenzhen Translators' Association and the Shenzhen Convention and Exhibition Center.

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# Expat Indians mark festival of colors

Alfred Zhang

SPLATTERING colored powder on each other and exchanging sweets among themselves, about 100 Indians living in Shenzhen celebrated the festival of Holi at Xiaomeisha beach resort yesterday.

Holi is an annual, predominantly Hindu spring festival, which takes place over two days in March or early April, according to the Hindu calendar. It is also known as the festival of colors as people throw colors at each other during Holi.

This year, Holi fell on March 15, but the local Indian community decided to celebrate it Sunday so that many could join in. This was also the first time that Indians in the city celebrated the festival.

At present, Shenzhen is home to more than 200 Indian families, many of whom have decided to settle here.

"We really consider Shenzhen as our second home," said Vinu Somaya, who has been living in the city for four years and enjoys the life here. "I have moved the whole family to Shenzhen, including my parents. We live and work here. The city is really my home."

With the growth of the Indian population in Shenzhen, the community decided to start celebrating its own festivals. Minni Ahuja, an organizer of yesterday's gathering, said: "We wanted to offer Indian people in Shenzhen an opportunity to feel more at home."

"It's just a happy festival. People are supposed to give up bitter feelings and forgive enemies on the day," said Muskan Somaya, wife of Vinu Somaya.

Besides throwing colors, people also splash water on each other. Some revelers even threw others into a water tank. "People celebrating the festival should be colored and wet," they said.

The exotic scene of celebration attracted many Chinese tourists visiting the beach and many were tempted to participate.

Luo Zhongying, a middle-aged woman, said: "It's fun to have your face and hair colored. Although I don't know about their custom, I am really happy seeing them enjoy themselves whole-heartedly."



## Art auction

A painting awaits buyers at an art auction at the Wuzhou Guest House yesterday. The auction, which is part of the lead-up to the China (Shenzhen) International Cultural Industry Fair in May, yielded 3.6 million yuan (US\$440,000) in revenue, with 164 out of 380 pieces of art and calligraphy auctioned off, along with more than 20 pieces of jade.

Xu Guangming

# Program to benefit orphans

Alfred Zhang

THE Shenzhen Social Welfare Center and a U.S.-based charity group Friday launched a joint initiative to benefit the city's orphaned children.

In the next three years, Half The Sky foundation (HTS) will establish early childhood education, personalized learning and infant nurturing programs in the Shenzhen Social Welfare Center, with a total donation of 1 million yuan (US\$120,000).

Some 30 local women will be selected from across Shenzhen to nurture infants who are less than 18 months old, while 20 kindergarten teachers will be chosen to teach children aged between 18 months and 7 years.

The welfare center will introduce personalized learning for children between 12 and 18 years old. The program will also provide six individual apartments for handicapped children in the center and select adoptive parents to take care of them.

Liu Runhua, chief of the Shenzhen Municipal Civil Affairs Bureau, said: "People in the West believe that Jesus loves all children. I never saw Christ,

but I regard what you (HTS) do is what Jesus wants to see. Good living condition is far from enough to create a great environment for children's healthy growth, physically and mentally. I really appreciate that the foundation offers not only money but also new concepts taking care of orphans."

Shenzhen is the 27th city in China to join hands with the foundation, which has so far assisted more than 10,000 Chinese children, according to HTS representatives.

Norma Rosenhain, CEO of Creatia Ltd., which contributed 1 million yuan on HTS' behalf, said: "Our company develops really fast in Guangdong over the last 20 years. We feel it's our time to give back to this region from the wealth of business and make children happy."

HTS sent its volunteers to help start the program a month ago. Janice Cotton, a specialist in child development and early education, started training Chinese nannies, teaching them to provide stimulation, individual attention and an active learning environment for orphans.

In 1998 a group of five U.S.



A foreign volunteer plays with a girl in the Shenzhen Social Welfare Center on Friday.  
Wang Xiaoke

adoptive families of Chinese children and concerned experts gathered together to form HTS.

More information on HTS can be obtained from [www.halfthesky.org](http://www.halfthesky.org).