

## 《Boss Sentenced for Arrears of Wage》

SHENZHEN - A man was sentenced to serve one and half years in prison for not paying his workers in this city earlier this month.

That marked the first time a jail term has been handed down in Shenzhen since nonpayment of wages was listed as a crime in May.

Xu Shijun, a construction contractor, was found guilty of not using money he had received from a client to pay the 208,596 yuan (\$33,000) in wages he owed to 47 people who had worked under him. The police caught up with him in August but could not get the 23-year-old to part with the money.

China's amended Criminal Law allows judicial authorities to imprison employers who maliciously withhold payments from their employees.

The case is part of authorities' work to help migrant workers receive the pay that they are owed and often expect to take money home for Spring Festival, said Tong Dan, deputy head of the Shenzhen Intermediate People's Court.

The traditional festival, an occasion for family reunions, starts on Jan 23 this year.

Nearly 20 percent of the 13 million residents of Shenzhen are migrants. That is one of the highest concentrations of such workers found among cities in South China, a manufacturing hub and a place where many migrants go for work.

Li Tao, deputy director of Shenzhen's human resources and social security administration, said the city dealt with 481 cases of wage arrearage last year. More than 44 percent of those had to do with manufacturing and 9.4 percent with the building industry.

Li said 6,196 workers from 60 companies received 31 million yuan in compensation through an insolvency fund last year. Set up in Shenzhen in 1997, it was China's first insolvency fund designed to protect workers.

A local company must contribute 400 yuan each year to the fund. If such a business then files for bankruptcy or a supervisor there absconds with money owed to employees, the employees who have not received the full pay owed them can obtain compensation from the fund.