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35 PER CENT RISE IN EMERGENCY PAYMENT RATES

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PAYMENT RATES UNDER THE EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND, WHICH PROVIDES GRANTS TO PEOPLE IN NEED OF RELIEF AS A RESULT OF FIRES, STORMS, FLOODING AND OTHER NATURAL DISASTERS, HAVE BEEN RAISED BY ABOUT 35 PER CENT.

THE NEW RATES APPLY ALSO TO THE TRAFFIC ACCIDENT VICTIMS ASSISTANCE SCHEME AND THE CRIMINAL AND LAW ENFORCEMENT INJURIES COMPENSATION SCHEME AS THEIR SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS IS BASED ON THAT OF THE FUND.

A SPOKESMAN FOR THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT SAID TODAY (MONDAY) THAT THE INCREASE IN PAYMENT RATES CAME INTO EFFECT FROM DECEMBER 23, 1981.

+THE REVISION REPRESENTS AN IMPROVEMENT IN THE LEVEL OF PAYMENT BASED MAINLY ON AVERAGE WAGES,+ HE SAID. +IT IS ALSO DESIGNED TO REFLECT INCREASE IN PRICES.+

UNDER THE FUND, DIFFERENT CATEGORIES OF GRANTS ARE AVAILABLE TO COVER DEATH OR PERSONAL INJURY, DOMESTIC RE-ACCOMMODATION AND RE-EQUIPMENT EXPENSES, REPAIR AND REPLACEMENT OF VESSELS, LOSS OF CROPS, LIVESTOCK OR FISH STOCK, AND OTHER EMERGENCIES.

UNDER THE REVISED RATES, THE MAXIMUM AMOUNT FOR DEATH GRANTS INVOLVING THE LOSS OF SOLE WAGE-EARNERS HAS BEEN RAISED FROM $23 000 TO $26 700, COMPRISING $18 700 FOR ONE SURVIVING DEPENDENT FAMILY MEMBER AND $1 600 FOR EACH ADDITIONAL SURVIVING DEPENDENT FAMILY MEMBER.

FOR LOSS OF A WAGE-EARNER WHERE THERE ARE OTHER WAGE-EARNERS IN THE FAMILY, THE MAXIMUM GRANT HAS BEEN INCREASED FROM $16 200 TO $17 400.

IN THE CASE OF THE LOSS OF HUSBAND OR WIFE WHO IS NOT A WAGE-EARNER WHERE THERE ARE CHILDREN, THE MAXIMUM GRANT HAS ALSO GONE UP FROM $16 200 TO $17 400.

BURIAL GRANTS HAVE BEEN RAISED FROM $1 600 TO $3 000 A PERSON.

THE MAXIMUM LEVEL OF DISABILITY GRANTS HAS BEEN INCREASED FROM $16 500 TO $22 440. FOR INJURY GRANTS, THE NEW PAYMENT RATE IS $160 UP TO A MAXIMUM OF $7 080 DEPENDING ON THE GRAVITY OF THE INJURY. PREVIOUSLY, THE MAXIMUM WAS $4 960.

THE EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND IS MANAGED BY THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE, WHO ACTS ON THE ADVICE OF THE EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND COMMITTEE, COMPRISING BOTH UNOFFICIAL AND OFFICIAL MEMBERS.

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COMPUTERS SAVE RESOURCES AND IMPROVE SERVICES

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COMPUTERISATION OF RECORD-KEEPING AND OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES IN GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS HAS BROUGHT ABOUT GREAT SAVINGS IN COST AS WELL AS IMPROVED - AND MORE EXPEDITIOUS - SERVICES TO THE PUBLIC.

THE COMPUTER SYSTEM SUBSTANTIALLY REDUCES MANPOWER COSTS AND EXPENSIVE STORAGE SPACE AND ELIMINATES AN ENORMOUS AMOUNT OF PAPERWORK, MR STEPHEN LAU, MANAGER OF THE DATA PROCESSING DIVISION WHICH IMPLEMENTS AND MONITORS ALL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATIVE COMPUTER SYSTEMS, EXPLAINED.

IT HAS ALSO PERMITTED THE INTRODUCTION OF THE LATEST MANAGEMENT-CONTROL TECHNIQUES INTO GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS.

CITING EXAMPLES TO SUPPORT HIS CLAIMS, HE SAID: +FOR INSTANCE, COMPUTERISATION OF CERTAIN GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS SUBSTANTIALLY SHORTENS THE WAITING TIME FOR A NUMBER OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES.+

+IT ALSO MAKES IT EASIER TO CATCH LAW BREAKERS BECAUSE OF THE EASE AND SPEED AT WHICH THE COMPUTERS WOULD ENABLE INVESTIGATORS TO COLLECT THE NECESSARY INFORMATION.+

+TAX DODGERS WOULD HAVE A MUCH MORE DIFFICULT TIME TRYING TO GET AWAY WITH CHEATING THE GOVERNMENT PURSE BECAUSE IN CONTRAST TO THE PREVIOUS LABORIOUS MANUAL SYSTEM OF KEEPING FILES ON ONE INDIVIDUAL IN DIFFERENT SECTIONS, THE INLAND REVENUE DEPARTMENT'S COMPUTER SYSTEM NOW PERMITS A QUICK AND COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF ALL THE ASSETS, LIABILITIES AND INCOME OF AN INDIVIDUAL.+

THE DATA PROCESSING DIVISION HAS INDEED COME A LONG WAY SINCE IT BEGAN OPERATIONS IN 1968 WITH A 16K 1902 COMPUTER FOR PROCESSING THE SECONDARY SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION AND TRADE STATISTICS. AFTER GOING THROUGH ITS EARLY TEETHING PROBLEMS, IT HAS SINCE INTRODUCED MANY ADVANCED PROGRAMME PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT CONTROL TECHNIQUES TO MORE THAN 30 GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS THROUGH COMPUTER APPLICATIONS.

OF THE MORE THAN 70 SYSTEMS IMPLEMENTED OR UNDER IMPLEMENTATION FOR GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS, THE MOST NOTABLE ONES ARE THE INLAND REVENUE DATABASE SYSTEM, THE VEHICLE AND DRIVING LICENSING DATA SYSTEM (VALID) FOR THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT, THE IMMIGRATION TRAFFIC INDEX FOR THE IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT, AN INVENTORY CONTROL SYSTEM FOR THE SUPPLIES DEPARTMENT, THE NOMINAL INDEX SYSTEM FOR THE ROYAL HONG KONG POLICE AND THE TEXTILE QUOTA LICENSING SYSTEM FOR THE EEC COUNTRIES FOR THE TRADE, INDUSTRY AND CUSTOMS DEPARTMENT.

/SUMMING UP .....

SUMMING UP THE ADVANTAGES OF THESE COMPUTER SYSTEMS OVER THE OLD MANUALLY PROCESSED RECORD-KEEPING OF FILES, INDEXES AND CROSS-INDEXES, MR LAU SAID THAT +ASIDE FROM THE CONSIDERABLE SAVINGS IN STORAGE SPACE AND MANPOWER, INTRODUCTION OF COMPUTERISATION IN MANY GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS HAS RESULTED IN A MUCH MORE STREAMLINED, ACCURATE, FLEXIBLE AND UP-TO-DATE RECORD KEEPING SYSTEM+.

+IN MORE TANGIBLE TERMS, IT MEANS SUBSTANTIAL SAVINGS OF TAX-PAYERS' MONEY, A CONSIDERABLE SHORTENING OF WAITING TIME FOR COUNTLESS GOVERNMENT SERVICES AND AN INCREASE IN REVENUE, AS IT WOULD BE A LOT MORE DIFFICULT NOW TO DODGE TAXES AND AVOID PAYING FINES FOR TRAFFIC OFFENCES,+ MR LAU NOTED.

WHILE IT IS GENERALLY AGREED AMONG LEADERS IN THE COMPUTER INDUSTRY THAT THERE IS A SHORTAGE OF COMPUTER SPECIALISTS, ESPECIALLY THOSE WITH TRAINING IN THE BUSINESS APPLICATION OF COMPUTER SYSTEMS, MR LAU SAID THIS IS NOT RESTRICTED TO HONG KONG.

MR GRAHAM MEAD, HEAD OF THE COMPUTER STUDIES DEPARTMENT AT THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC, SAYS THERE ARE AT PRESENT ABOUT 4 200 COMPUTER ANALYSTS AND PROGRAMMERS IN HONG KONG AND THE NEED FOR THEM INCREASES BY ABOUT 25 PER CENT EACH YEAR.

THE POLYTECHNIC PRODUCES ABOUT 100 COMPUTER-STUDIES GRADUATES EACH YEAR AND THE TWO LOCAL UNIVERSITIES PRODUCE 35-50 MORE COMPUTER MAJORS. BUT THE 150 OR SO FOREIGN-TRAINED GRADUATES WHO RETURNED TO HONG KONG WERE NEGATED BY AN EQUAL NUMBER WHO LEFT.

MR LAU AND EXPERTS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR GENERALLY AGREED THAT COMPUTING CAME RATHER BELATEDLY TO HONG KONG. HONG KONG WOULD THUS HAVE TO PUT IN SOME EXTRA EFFORT TO MAKE UP FOR LOST TIME IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN OUR COMPETITIVE EDGE IN BOTH COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY. IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT HONG KONG HAS MORE COMPUTERS INSTALLED THAN ANY OTHER COUNTRY IN SOUTH EAST ASIA.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE CURRENT AND POTENTIAL WIDE-SPREAD USE OF COMPUTERS THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT WILL INTRODUCE A COMPUTER SUBJECT TO FORM FOUR STUDENTS IN 40 SCHOOLS IN SEPTEMBER 1982.

THE DEPARTMENT'S FIRST EFFORT TO PROPAGATE COMPUTER KNOWLEDGE, HOWEVER, STARTED IN 1977 WHEN IT'S MATHEMATICS SECTION BEGAN ORGANISING SHORT COMPUTER COURSES FOR MATHEMATICS TEACHERS. SINCE THEN, 30 SUCH COURSES, ATTENDED BY OVER 800 TEACHERS, HAVE BEEN HELD. AT LEAST THREE MORE COURSES WILL BE ORGANISED IN 1982.

COMMENTING ON THE RELATIVE SECURITY OF COMPUTER-STORED DATA AND THE OLD MANUAL SYSTEMS IT REPLACED, MR LAU SAID THERE IS +NO QUESTION THAT COMPUTERISED DATA IS FAR MORE SAFE BECAUSE IT IS MORE COMPACT AND ACCESS TO IT REQUIRES NOT ONLY AUTHORISATION BUT THE NECESSARY SPECIAL KNOWHOW+.

/HE ADDED .....

HE ADDED THAT +SECURITY IS BASICALLY AT TWO LEVELS: THE PHYSICAL LEVEL AND THE LOGICAL LEVEL. THE FIRST SIMPLY INVOLVES THE GUARDING OF COMPUTER PREMISES WHILE THE SECOND IS A LOT MORE COMPLEX. AT THE SIMPLEST LEVEL A COMPUTER COULD ONLY BE ACCESSED THROUGH 'PASSWORDS' KNOWN ONLY TO AUTHORISED USERS, WITH BUILT-IN RESTRICTIONS TO ALLOW OR DISALLOW USERS IN THE DISPLAY, MODIFICATION AND ERASURE OF DATA.+

+ANOTHER ADDED SECURITY MEASURE IS 'TIME FIXES', WHICH WOULD RENDER DATA IN A COMPUTER COMPLETELY INACCESSIBLE OVER A CERTAIN TIME PERIOD WHEN DATA USE IS NOT EXPECTED.+

WHILE CONSCIOUSLY ADMITTING +THERE IS NO FOOLPROOF WAY TO SECURE A COMPUTER AGAINST UNAUTHORISED ACCESS, WE MUST NOT TURN AWAY FROM ITS APPLICATION AS THE BENEFITS WOULD FAR OUTWEIGH THE POTENTIAL INSTANCES OF ABUSE,+ MR LAU SAID.

+FURTHERMORE, WE ARE ACTUALLY SEEING ONLY THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG IN COMPUTER APPLICATIONS.+

+THAT WE ARE ALSO AT THE THRESHOLD OF AN 'INFORMATION EXPLOSION' IN THE 80'S DUE TO RAPID TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES OUGHT TO MAKE US MORE DETERMINED IN TRAINING COMPUTER WORKERS,+ SAID MR LAU, ADDING THAT HIS SENTIMENTS OVER THE ISSUE WERE SHARED BY COMPUTER EXPERTS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

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THE LORD PRIVY SEAL LEAVES FOR CHINA

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THE LORD PRIVY SEAL, THE RT HON HUMPHREY ATKINS, MP AND MRS ATKINS LEFT HONG KONG FOR CHINA THIS MORNING AFTER A ONE-DAY STOPOVER.

MR AND MRS ATKINS WERE SEEN OFF AT THE AIRPORT BY THE GOVERNOR, SIR MURRAY MACLEHOSE. THEY WILL RETURN TO HONG KONG ON FRIDAY (JANUARY 8) FOR A THREE-DAY VISIT.

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EYE IN THE SKY

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THERE'S NO ESCAPE FOR THE VAGABOND ISLANDS OF RUBBISH IN HONG KONG'S HARBOUR NOW THAT THE EYES OF THE CLEAN HONG KONG CAMPAIGN HAVE TAKEN TO THE SKY.

HELICOPTER 'LAP SAP' PATROLS HAVE BECOME A ROUTINE MARINE DEPARTMENT FUNCTION, AND FROM AN OLYMPIAN 500 FEET UP, ABOARD AN RHKAAF DAUPHIN CHOPPER, MARINE OFFICER TREVOR BERRY CAN SPOT EVEN THE MOST FURTIVE WATER-BORNE LITTER.

+IT'S MARVELOUS,+ SAID MR BERRY, +ALL FLOATING REFUSE IS VISIBLE - EVEN SOLITARY PLASTIC BAGS.+

AND FLYING AT 90 KNOTS, THE HELICOPTER CAN MAKE A CIRCULAR TRIP VIA GREEN ISLAND, MEI FOO SUN CHUEN, STAR FERRY, KWUN TONG AND ALDRICH BAY IN ABOUT 12 MINUTES.

COVERING THE SAME AREA BY BOAT TAKES TWO HOURS AND VISIBILITY IS LIMITED TO THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY OF THE BOAT.

BUT WITH THE HELICOPTER, MR BERRY CAN GET +AN IMMEDIATE UP-TO-DATE PICTURE OF THE HARBOUR, ESTABLISH PRIORITIES AND SEND OUT UNITS ACCORDINGLY.+

+FOR THE FIRST TIME WE CAN GET AN OVERALL VIEW BEFORE WE START WORK.+

POTENTIAL TROUBLEMAKERS TOO ARE NAKED TO MR BERRY'S ALL-SEEING EYES, AND RECENTLY HE SPOTTED A SHIP AT ANCHOR WITH A LARGE PILE OF REFUSE ON ITS DECK.

+I SENT ONE OF MY LADS TO THE SHIP TO MAKE SURE THE RUBBISH WASN'T DUMPED IN THE HARBOUR.+

AS SOON AS THE DAUPHIN TOUCHES DOWN, A REPORT IS SENT TO MR BERRY'S SENIOR ASSISTANT MARINE INSPECTOR DAVID LEUNG AT MARINE DEPARTMENT HEADQUARTERS.

MR LEUNG PLOTS THE LOCATION OF FLOATING RUBBISH ON A CIVIL AVIATION URBAN CRASH MAP GRID SUPPLIED BY THE CIVIL AVIATION DEPARTMENT, AND DISPATCHES CLEAN-UP VESSELS TO TROUBLE SPOTS.

A TYPICALLY CRYPTIC DISPATCH WOULD READ +SEND WATERWITCH 3 TO G13.+

FOR THE BENEFIT OF THOSE ON DRY LAND AND EARTH-BOUND, WATERWITCH 3 IS A MARINE REFUSE COLLECTION VESSEL AND G13 IS THE CENTRAL DISTRICT.

PILOTED BY FLIGHT LIEUTENANT JAMES CURTIS, THE HELICOPTER LIFT OFF FROM HMS TAMAR EVERY MONDAY, WEDNESDAY AND FRIDAY.

/+OBVIOUSLY, ...

+OBVIOUSLY, DAILY FLIGHTS WOULD BE IDEAL,+ SAID MR BERRY, +BUT THEY WOULD DOUBLE THE COST AND THE RHKAAF WORK LOAD.+

+AND LESS THAN THREE FLIGHTS A WEEK WOULD BE INEFFECTIVE.+

HE BELIEVES THEREFORE, THAT THE NUMBER THREE STRIKES THE RIGHT BALANCE BETWEEN EFFICIENCY AND ECONOMY.

MR BERRY GOES ON EACH PATROL ACCOMPANIED BY ONE ASSISTANT AT A TIME, BUT ALL OF HIS ASSISTANTS ARE EXPECTED TO EVENTUALLY BECOME FAMILIAR WITH THE ROUTINE.

+IN DUE COURSE, THEY WILL GET THEIR 'LAP SAP' WINGS AND WILL DO THE PATROLS ON THEIR OWN.+

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TSUEN WAN PES CENTRES OPEN DURING LUNCHTIME

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TSUEN WAN RESIDENTS ARE USING THEIR LUNCH BREAK TO SEEK ADVICE AND MAKE ENQUIRIES AT THE DISTRICT OFFICE'S PUBLIC ENQUIRY SERVICE CENTRES.

SINCE SEPTEMBER LAST YEAR, THE CENTRES AT TSUEN KING BUILDING IN HOI PA STREET AND AT KWAI KING BUILDING IN KWONG FAI CIRCUIT HAVE REMAINED OPEN BETWEEN 1 PM AND 2 PM.

DURING THE THREE-MONTH PERIOD ENDING NOVEMBER, ABOUT 800 RESIDENTS VISITED THE TWO CENTRES.

STAFF AT THE CENTRES ALSO RECEIVED MORE THAN 1 000 PHONE CALLS INQUIRING ABOUT TENANCY DISPUTES, IMMIGRATION POLICIES, GOVERNMENT JOB VACANCIES, FAMILY QUARRELS AND FREE LEGAL ADVICE.

IN ADDITION, THEY DISTRIBUTED 1 400 FORMS, PAMPHLETS AND PUBLICITY MATERIAL.

A DISTRICT OFFICE SPOKESMAN SAID IN VIEW OF THE GOOD RESPONSE, THE LUNCHTIME SERVICE WOULD BE ON A PERMANENT BASIS.

+WE ARE ALSO CONSIDERING EXTENDING IT TO OTHER PES CENTRES,+ HE SAID.

THE OTHER SIX PES CENTRES IN THE DISTRICT AT PRESENT OPERATE FROM 8.45 AM TO 1 PM AND FROM 2 PM TO 5.15 PM ON WEEKDAYS AND FROM 9 AM TO 12 NOON ON SATURDAYS.

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REGIONALISATION OF TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT

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THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT HAS BEEN PARTLY REORGANISED INTO THREE REGIONAL DIVISIONS - HONG KONG ISLAND, KOWLOON/NEW KOWLOON AND THE NEW TERRITORIES.

UNDER THE REORGANISATION, EACH OF THE REGIONAL DIVISIONS WILL BE HEADED BY A CHIEF TRANSPORT OFFICER WHO WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT OPERATIONS AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT IN THE REGION.

ANNOUNCING THIS TODAY (MONDAY), THE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FOR TRANSPORT, MR PETER LEEDS, SAID: +THIS CHANGE IS BEING MADE TO FIT IN WITH THE DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIONS AND IN ANTICIPATION OF THE TRANSFER OF SOME PARTS OF THE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT'S HIGHWAYS OFFICE LATER IN THE YEAR.+

HE EMPHASISED THAT THE REORGANISATION WOULD MAKE IT EASIER TO GIVE BETTER SERVICE TO THE DISTRICT BOARDS.

FROM TODAY, THE CHIEF TRANSPORT OFFICER/KOWLOON AND THE CHIEF TRANSPORT OFFICER/NEW TERRITORIES WILL BE ACCOMMODATED IN THE REGIONAL OFFICE AT PARK-IN COMMERCIAL CENTRE, DUNDAS STREET, MONG KOK, WHILE THE CHIEF TRANSPORT OFFICER/HONG KONG ISLAND WILL REMAIN AT THE DEPARTMENT'S HEADQUARTERS IN OI KWAN ROAD.

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TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF GUTZLAFF STREET

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A SECTION OF GUTZLAFF STREET BETWEEN QUEEN'S ROAD CENTRAL AND STANLEY STREET WILL REMAIN CLOSED TO TRAFFIC FOR ANOTHER TWO MONTHS FOR DRAINAGE MAINTENANCE WORK.

SIGNS WILL BE PUT UP TO GUIDE MOTORISTS.

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UK STRING QUARTET TO PERFORM

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THE FOURTH TSUEN WAN ARTS FESTIVAL WILL BE HELD BETWEEN JANUARY 22 AND FEBRUARY 13.

THIRTEEN OVERSEAS AND LOCAL GROUPS WILL GIVE 39 INDOOR PROGRAMMES AS WELL AS 16 OUTDOOR PERFORMANCES DURING THE FESTIVAL.

INCORPORATED INTO THE FESTIVAL PROGRAMME WILL ALSO BE A CONCERT BY BRITAIN'S GABRIELI STRING QUARTET.

THE CONCERT IS A PART OF THE TENTH HONG KONG ARTS FESTIVAL AND WILL BE HELD AT THE TSUEN WAN TOWN HALL CULTURAL ACTIVITIES HALL ON FEBRUARY 11 AT 8 PM.

GABRIELI STRING QUARTET COMPRISES OF FOUR TOP INSTRUMENTALISTS, KENNETH SILLITO (VIOLIN), BRENDAN O'REILLY (VIOLIN), LAN JEWEL (VIOLA) AND KEITH HARVEY (CELLO).

AN INTERESTING PROGRAMME OF HAYDN'S +STRING QUARTET, OPUS 76 NO. 4 IN B FLAT MAJOR+ (SUNRISE), MOZART'S +STRING QUARTET NO. 20 IN DK 499+ (HOFFMEISTER), AND BEETHOVEN'S +STRING QUARTET NO. 14 IN C SHARP MINOR OPUS 131+ WILL BE FEATURED IN THEIR HONG KONG PREMIERE.

TICKETS AT $10 ARE NOW AVAILABLE AT THE TSUEN WAN TOWN HALL AND HONG KONG CITY HALL BOX OFFICES, SPACE MUSEUM ASTRONOMY BOOKSHOP AS WELL AS NEW TERRITORIES MOBILE LIBRARY.

THE TSUEN WAN ARTS FESTIVAL DIARIES ARE AVAILABLE FOR COLLECTION AT THE TSUEN WAN TOWN HALL, THE HONG KONG ARTS CENTRE, THE MUSIC OFFICE, THE BRITISH COUNCIL, ALLIANCE FRANCAISE, GOETHE INSTITUT, NEW TERRITORIES PUBLIC LIBRARIES, ALL DISTRICT OFFICES OF THE NEW TERRITORIES ADMINISTRATION AND CITY DISTRICT OFFICES.

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