

Graphic exhibition on Soleimani



Arts & Culture Desk

IRNA – A graphic art exhibition by the Revayate Fath Cultural Foundation commemorating the anniversary of the martyrdom of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani began in Tehran's Metro on Sunday. The exhibition showcases 25 graphic works from the Visual Arts Society of the Revayate Fath Cultural Foundation. This exhibition will be open to the public until January 17.

'Past Lives' wins at Nat'l Society of Film Critics

VARIETY – The National Society of Film Critics (NSFC) announced its awardees for 2023's best achievements in film. This year marks the 58th annual awards, which are voted upon by the prestigious organization's slate of film critics, including Variety's chief film critics Owen Gleiberman and Peter Debruge.

Celine Song's 'Past Lives' — the romantic drama about childhood sweethearts, Nora (Greta Lee) and Hae Sung (Teo Yoo), who reunite years later — took home the coveted award for best picture. 'Past Lives' and 'Song' were also nominated in the category for best screenplay. Andrew Scott scored the best actor prize for his performance in 'All of Us Strangers,' while Charles Melton was named best supporting actor for 'May December.'

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Niavaran to put Iran's 54 caravanserais registered in UNESCO on display

In an effort to showcase and emphasize the importance of Iran's globally-registered caravanserais, an event titled, '54 Registered Caravanserais of Iran in UNESCO,' will take place in Tehran's Niavaran Cultural Center from January 11 to 13. Maryam Delafkan, the executive director of the event, highlighted that it was September 17 that 54 caravanserais were inscribed on UNESCO's world heritage list, adding that this achievement is among the significant events that contribute to the cultural heritage

and identity of Islamic Iran, Tasnim news agency wrote. Delafkan provided details about the event, mentioning that the opening ceremony on January 11 will feature officials from the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Chamber of Commerce, and various embassies. The event will also mark the unveiling of the book, 'Iran's Registered Caravanserais in UNESCO,' featuring photographs and paintings, providing insights into research activities, architectural contributions, and the Leader's

statements on the importance of cultural heritage. Furthermore, Delafkan noted that a 45-minute documentary highlighting architectural luminaries such as Ali-Akbar Nasrabadi, Shahriar Cyrus, Master Dariush Zahedi and others will be introduced during the event. The documentary explores the significance of Iranian caravanserais and their architecture from the Sasanian era to the Safavid era. Following the ceremonies, an exhibition showcasing artworks related to caravanserais, including pho-

tographs, paintings, and handicrafts used in these historical sites, will be open to the public January 12 and 13. Delafkan added that Shahab Talaei Shokri, the CEO and Chairman of the Board of the Handicrafts Development Fund, will deliver a lecture on Jan. 12 on the importance of focusing on caravanserais and reviving Islamic civilization. Moreover, a program featuring theatrical and artistic performances will illustrate the evolutionary journey of the Silk Road, incorporating Islamic architectural symbols such



as water, arabesque and Islamic motifs, accompanied by music.

It turns out paper straws might pose a serious problem too



Paper straws are not quite the eco solution many had hoped for. Not only do these liquid slurping alternatives tend to wilt in a frustratingly fast manner, they contain low levels of forever chemicals, according to new research. How that impacts the health of an individual slurper is unknown, but because forever chemicals — also known as poly- and perfluoroalkyl substances (aka PFAS) — can take centuries to break down to a fraction of their concentration in the environment, these straws are not necessarily 'biodegradable', Science Alert reported. In fact, scientists at the University of Antwerp in Belgium argue that some plant-based and 'eco-friendly' alternatives to plastic may be silently contributing to PFAS pollution. When researchers tested 39 different straw brands made from plastic, paper, glass, bamboo, or stainless steel,

they found PFAS in almost all the materials. Stainless steel was the only consistent exception. Today, many products are made with PFAS — a group of 15,000 synthetic chemicals, some of which may be toxic to animal and human health at high enough concentrations. Scientists are still figuring out at what levels forever chemicals in our surrounds might elevate health risks, but because they can build up in the environment and in animal bodies, scientists worry even low levels of pollution could come back to haunt us. Cutting back on plastic can help but only substantially if the alternatives are PFAS-free. To make paper and bamboo straws water-repellent though, many manufacturers appear to add PFAS. Either that, or the producers are using recycled materials that already contain forever chemicals.

The result is the same. In 2021, scientists in the United States were the first to detect PFAS in plant-based straws, indicating that consumers may be ingesting "a so far undetermined amount of PFAS". Researchers in Belgium have now found the same. Using high-resolution mass spectrometry, the authors analyzed the chemical composition of 20 paper straws, 5 glass straws, 5 bamboo straws, 5 stainless steel straws, and 4 plastic straws. They were looking for 29 different PFAS, specifically. In all but two of the paper-based straws, researchers detected PFAS, although the concentrations were fairly low and varied quite a lot between products. Forever chemicals were also detected in three plastic straw brands, two glass straw brands, and four bamboo brands. Among these straws, the most frequently detect-

ed PFAS, perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), has been banned in most countries since 2020. This chemical can accumulate in an animal's body, where it appears to negatively impact development and reproduction at certain concentrations. "Small amounts of PFAS, while not harmful in themselves, can add to the chemical load already present in the body," explains environmental scientist Thimo Groffen from the University of Antwerp. Even after the straws are used, their pollutants could persist. If the straws are recycled, the chemicals could end up in a new product. And if the straws go to landfill or are incinerated, their chemicals will quietly spread in the wind or soil. For consumers worried about the potential environmental or health effects, Groffen suggests using stainless steel straws, or no straw at all.