



An honor from Japan

Aristides Alafouzos, the president of Kathimerini's board of directors, yesterday became one of only a handful of Greeks to be awarded Japan's Order of the Rising Sun (Gold Rays with Rosette) in recognition of his "lengthy contribution to the strengthening of Greek-Japanese economic ties and understanding between the countries' peoples," the Japanese Embassy in Athens said in a statement. In his capacity as a shipowner, Alafouzos showed faith in Japan's shipbuilding industry, which "played an important role in the growth of Japanese industry in the second half of the 20th century" and which helped form a relationship that was "the base of Greek-Japanese economic and trade relations today," the embassy said. The award also recognizes the contribution that articles about Japan frequently published in Kathimerini have made to a better understanding between the Greek and Japanese peoples, the embassy said, adding that the award was being made on the occasion of 110 years of friendship between Japan and Greece.

photo: Aristides Alafouzos (fourth from left) is seen at the delivery ceremony for the ship Thera at the NKK shipyard in Japan. Also in the photo, (third from right) Lena Alafouzou, Mr Alafouzos's wife, and (second from left) Ioannis Alafouzos, president of Skai TV.

Thessaloniki festival ups prizes

The Thessaloniki Film Festival opens next week with a bigger prize purse and a screening schedule that includes fewer local Greek films because of an ongoing dispute within the Greek film community.

The value of the festival's two top awards -- the Golden and Silver Alexanders -- have been upped from 37,000 Euros (\$55,000) to \$59,000, and from \$33,000 to \$37,000 respectively, the festival said Wednesday.

Although a large group of Greek directors and producers are boycotting the festival's Greek State Cinema Awards and Greek Panorama section, there are still two local films -- the usual number -- competing in the previously announced international competition program: "Dancing on Ice," directed by Stavros Ioannou and "Small Revolts" by Kyriakos Katzourakis.

Internationally acclaimed Greek director Theo Angelopoulos heads an international jury that includes Danish festival consultant, Lissy Belaiche, Serbian actress Mirjana Karanovic, Mexican production designer Eugenio Caballero, Philippines director Lav Diaz, Hungarian director Gyorgi Palfi and American director Amos Poe.

The dispute within the Greek film community centers on a controversy over the existing film law, introduced 20 years ago, which many want to be updated to include tax incentives, stronger provisions for widely flouted rules on TV stations investing 1.5% of revenue in production and the failure to pass on the full amount of a cinema ticket sales levy to public funding for film.

It means that there are fewer Greek films screening across the festival programs, although eight new features -- including the two in competition -- will be presented in the Greek Special Screenings. A further eight films shot on digital cameras will be showcased in the DigitalWave section, now in its fourth year.

The festival opens Nov. 13 with a screening of German director Fatih Akin's "Soul Kitchen." It closes Nov. 22 with French director Alain Resnais' "Wild Grass."

Guests who have confirmed attendance include German director Werner Herzog, Serbia's Goran Paskaljevic, British producer Jeremy Thomas and British-born actress and musician Jane Birkin.

Top 300 firms hit with one-off tax

Charge will fund benefits to low income earners; cost of pre-election pledge passed on to healthy companies

Greece's top 300 companies will be called upon to provide most of the 1 billion euros in benefits to be handed to low income earners in a deal that will help the government meet a pre-election pledge without dipping into state finances.

Finance Minister Giorgos Papaconstantiniou said yesterday a one-off tax will be imposed on 2008 profits posted by companies that have benefited from tax cuts in the last five years.

"No government likes to take one-off measures, but the situation is very difficult," the minister told reporters after a Cabinet meeting.

The tax will apply on 2008 pre-tax earnings and range from 5 to 10 percent, depending on the size of the



Finance Minister Giorgos Papaconstantiniou at yesterday's press conference, where he announced a one-off tax to be paid by Greece's leading firms. The minister said the charge will contribute to a redistribution of income.

profit. About 140 businesses with pre-tax earnings of 5 to 10 million euros in 2008 will face a 5 percent one-off tax while another 85 firms with profits of 10 to 25 million will be hit with a 7 percent tax rate. For those with earnings of more than 25 million euros, the tax rate will be 10

percent.

The list of companies likely to pay the one-off levy include many of Greece's top banks, industrial firms and retailers, according to a list prepared by research company ICAP. The 1 billion euros of support will relieve about 2.5 million low-income individuals, the minister said. Most of it, 870 million, will come from the corporate tax and the rest from an increase in tax on properties worth more than 600,000 euros owned by individuals.

The minister said the tax will boost "those who need it most" without burdening the state budget.

With Greece's budget deficit this year seen at 12.5 percent of output, European Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs Joaquin Almunia said in Brussels that Greece will be censured next week for failing to remedy the shortfall.

Greece will face the next steps in the Commission's excessive deficit procedure which could lead to fines, though this has never happened. Greek shares fell 2.35 percent in what analysts said was a reaction by investors to the news and the overall downward trend in European markets. The reaction from business leaders was mixed, with the president of the Hellenic Federation of Enterprises (SEV), Dimitris Daskalopoulos, supporting plans for the tax. Greek business "is well aware that the economy is in an emergency and is willing to contribute with a one-off charge," he said.

On the other hand, Athens Chamber of Commerce and Industry (EBEA) president Constantinos Michalos opposed the measure and called on the government to stick to its pre-election promise and not impose additional one-off tax measures.

Fast Eating Limits Gut Hormones That Induce Fullness

Eating too fast can lead to overeating because gulping down food limits the release of hormones in the gut that trigger the feeling of being full, Greek researchers have found.

For the study, volunteers ate 300 milliliters of ice cream at different rates. Blood levels of glucose, insulin, lipids and gut hormones were measured before and after consumption of the ice cream. Participants who took 30 minutes to finish the ice cream had higher concentrations of the gut hormones peptide YY and glucagon-like peptide and also tended to feel more full than those who took less time to eat the ice cream.

Previous research has shown that the release of these hormones after a meal tells the brain the person is full, but this is the first study to examine how different rates of eating affect the release of the hormones.

"Most of us have heard that eating fast can lead to food overconsumption and obesity, and in fact some observational studies have supported this notion," lead author Dr. Alexander Kokkinos, of Laiko General Hospital in Athens, said in a news release from the Endocrine Society. "Our study provides a possible explanation for the relationship between speed eating and overeating by showing that the rate at which someone eats may impact the release of gut hormones that signal the brain to stop eating."