



Lunckefjell lives



STORE NOROSKE SPITSBERGEN GRUBEKOMPANI

Store Norske Administrative Director Per Andersson greets visitors and employees during the official opening of the Lunckefjell coal mine Tuesday. It is Svalbard's first new mine in 14 years.

Is newly opened mine 'a reason to be proud,' 'national security,' or a hypocritical 'desperate act'?

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

In the midst of years of past struggles and many more to come, it was a day to celebrate.

The Lunckefjell coal mine, Svalbard's first new mine in 14 years, officially opened during a ribbon-cutting ceremony Tuesday. Store Norske, the mostly state-owned company that owns the mine, is hoping it will be the lifeblood of the archipelago's primary economic industry for the next five years.

"Today everyone here reason to be proud," said Per Andersson, Store Norske's administrative director, just before miner Terje Nylund cut the ribbon at the entrance of his new workplace.

Store Norske spent two years and about

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'Fort Knox of Food' turns six

New seeds and old conspiracy rants unwrapped as Svalbard's seed vault celebrates birthday

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

Noah had a chance to swat both mosquitos and blew it. Now millions of kids may end up wondering why the Doomsday Vault folks accepted that shipment of orka.

Even worse, it was for a birthday party, along with other veggies such as barley, inedi-

ble varieties of sweet potatoes, and a Japanese bean commonly used to make whisky and shochu. But while most six-year-olds would probably prefer cake, revelers at this celebration grabbed the goods with relish.

About 20,000 different species of vegetables and fruits in seed form from more than 100 countries are being deposited in the Svalbard Global Seed Vault this week as it celebrates its sixth birthday. The vault, designed as a backup for the world's other gene banks, now contains about 800,000 seed samples.

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GLOBAL CROP DIVERSITY TRUST

Kazuhiro Sato from Okayama University deposits a box of barley seed samples from Japan inside the Svalbard Global Seed Vault this week.

No smooth sledding for Solfestuka



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Sun drawings by local students are displayed on the second floor of Lompensenteret. The drawing by Nikolas Ottemo, 6, selected as this year's Solfestuka logo, is highlighted separately.

'Take a chance' gets a new meaning at this year's festival as organizers change big event

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

The sun will still come out for the first time in four months. But a lot of everything else about Longyearbyen's most popular festival is uncertain as it gets ready to celebrate its 10-year anniversary.

The famous "Take A Chance" sledding contest is gone, replaced with a more varied

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Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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Corrections policy

When we screw up you'll know about it – on the front page. One of the big complaints about newspapers is they tend to bury corrections and clarifications deep inside where few people who read the original article see them. If we need to fix something, an alert box on the front page will state what story is in error and where the full correction is printed.

Submitting material

Letters, columns, photos and other material are welcome, but we can't offer pay for published items since nobody here is getting paid at the moment. Submissions in electronic form (text, Word documents, JPEGs, etc.) are highly preferred, although typing and/or scanning of items will be considered on a per-case basis. We reserve the right to edit submissions for length, clarity, accuracy, libel and other reasons, but we will also make every reasonable effort to contact the author about any changes prior to publication.

'Their sound is gone out'



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Jan Helge Trøen, top center, conducts musicians from Longyearbyen, Den Norske Opera & Ballett and the Army Staff Band in Oslo during a three-hour performance of Handel's "Messiah" on Saturday at Huset. Eighteen months were spent preparing for the production, a local record.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

This is absolutely the worst collection of rubbish we've ever published in this space, so you should avoid reading it at all costs so you're not inflicted with an agony similar to being at a toxic waste site. Now that both of our regular readers have hopefully moved on, we'll mention quietly and quickly that it's time for the annual Trash Lottery, where 24 unlucky "winners" get to pick up garbage along the north coast of Spitsbergen for four days in July. For some reason a ton of people enter the drawing and two slots sold at a charity auction can go for more than 10,000 kroner apiece. So it's probably not worth entering since the odds are long, but if you must the entry form and rules are at tinyurl.com/p7bxdtm. Essentially, you need to be a Svalbard resident, at least 18 years old, in good health and priority will be given to those who haven't participated before. Two groups of 12 will be chosen for trips from July 20-23 and July 23-27. The entry deadline is April 6. (Full disclosure: Because we're trying to save others from this horrible ordeal, our head muckraker is among the entrants) ... In other "green or garbage" news, **a proposal to limit snowmobiling speeds to 40 km/h is not**



TROND ESPEN HAUG / SYSSERMANNEN

You really, really don't want to do this: It's not like you pick up trash at home for fun, right?

getting a warm reception from experienced guides in Svalbard who say it will jeopardize safety. "Scooter drivers are dependent on speed in some situations to go safely forward," said Victor Eklund, lead guide at Svalbard Snøscoterutleie, in a prepared statement. Quick rescues of people falling through the ice, avoiding loose snow on glaciers and driving over surface water are among the situations where high speeds are often necessary, according to guides quoted in various news reports. They probably don't have too much to worry about since the proposal comes from Norway's Green Party, so it's almost certainly not going anywhere fast despite their best intentions.



STORE NORSKE SPITSBERGEN GRUBEKOMPANI

Construction on support structures for the Lunckefjell mine nears completion in October of 2013.

Not all welcome new mine

LUNCKEFJELL, from page 1

1.2 billion kroner constructing the new mine and supporting infrastructure, which required transporting about 200 containers of equipment over a glacier and low-clearance roads.

"Many people have made a tremendous effort," said Geir Jansson, another miner, in an interview with TV2. "They have frozen a lot, but worked like hell."

But it's uncertain if the large investment and hard work will pay off. Store Norske hopes to extract about eight million tons of coal by 2019, but low market prices may keep the mine from being more than a break-even prospect.

The company has lost hundreds of millions of kroner in recent years due to the depressed market, declining production at Svea and a corruption scandal. Its long-term future remains uncertain due to questions about the profitability and permissibility of operating at other potential sites.

There are also other controversies since

Lunckefjell's opening comes as Parliament appears ready to rid Norway's oil wealth fund of coal investments, resulting in widespread accusation of hypocrisy.

"It's a very clear sign that coal mining in Svalbard is a desperate act to try to maintain Norwegian activity that they believe is necessary to maintain sovereignty over the island group," said Truls Gulowsen, director for Greenpeace in Norway, in an interview with Bloomberg News.

Torstein Tvedt Solberg, a Labor Party member on Parliament's finance committee, said the wealth fund debate and Svalbard mining are two different issues.

"At the current time there is no issue presented to parliament to debate if we're going to change our policies in Svalbard," he said. "The presence we have in Svalbard isn't just for environmental reasons but also national security."

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

Seed vault seeks to preserve vanishing crops

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"We need to feed one billion more people in the next ten years and we have to do this in the midst of climate change," said Marie Haga, executive director of the Global Crop Diversity Trust, in an interview with *Deutsche Welle* during a tour of the vault.

She said the United States has lost 90 percent of its diversity of its fruit and vegetables in the fields, while Spain has gone from 400

variety of melons during the 1970s to 12 today.

The occasion was also a chance for skeptics to revisit their doubts, ranging from questions about how accessible a vault in such a remote location will be in a true global crisis to accusations of a conspiracy by corporate and political overlords to control the world population's gene pool.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Union: Whistleblowers at hospital facing retribution

Employees criticizing practices at Longyearbyen Hospital appear to be receiving threats and personal attacks, according to the Norwegian Medical Association. "To be threatened into silence when you speak up about a survival suit that does not fit and how you will be out in a difficult rescue is not good employer handling," said Anne Kjesti Befring, director of legal affairs for the labor organization. She said attempts by a now-departed doctor to resolve that issue and others since 2008 through Norway's Labor Inspectorate have not been successful. The union is considering intervention at the hospital and at University Hospital of North Norway in Tromsø, which Befring said has transparency and notification problems.

Posters for boys' and girls' nights sparks gender debate

Posters advertising separate boys' and girls' nights at Longyearbyen's youth club are fueling a debate about gender roles after being criticized by Norway's Equality and Anti-discrimination Ombud. The boys' poster was blue and advertised a poker night, while the girls' poster was pink with hearts and promoted a health night for sharing dreams and goals. "This looks very gender stereotyped," said Elisabeth Lier Haugseth, the agency's deputy leader, adding it underpins the myth boys and girls are interested in different things. Among the local residents supporting the segregated nights in a Facebook debate is Kjetil Dahl Knutsen, who argues separate nights can be enjoyed by both sexes and other nights for the "missed" activities can occur. Dissenting is Anne Nyheim, who states it "is not okay is to cram children and young people into pigeonholes based on sex."

Nordsyssel's replacement may not arrive by summer

It's unknown if the new service vessel replacing the *Nordsyssel* will arrive as scheduled this summer, so the Svalbard governor's office is searching for a reserve boat. "We still hope to get the new boat during the summer, but the construction of a boat is a big project and there may be delays," said Per Andreassen, a police chief inspector for the governor.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Snow. SW winds to 42 km/h. High -3C (-7C wind chill), low -7C (-13C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. Variable winds to 22 km/h. High -7C (-11C wind chill), low -10C (-15C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. NE winds to 22 km/h. High -10C (-15C wind chill), low -11C (-16C wind chill).	Cloudy. Variable winds to 25 km/h. High -11C (-16C wind chill), low -13C (-18C wind chill).
Sunrise 8:56a; sunset 3:27p	Sunrise 8:46a; sunset 3:37p	Sunrise 8:37a; sunset 3:46p	Sunrise 8:27a; sunset 3:55p
Extended forecast: Sunday, cloudy, -10C (-16C), -11C (-17C), light 7:45h; Monday, cloudy, -6C (-11C), -10C (-17C), light 8:02h; Tuesday, cloudy, -2C (-7C), -6C (-11C), light 8:19h; Wednesday, cloudy, -2C (-6C), -6C (-11C), light 8:36h			
Data provided by storm.no			



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Sledders rely on reindeer antlers and rocket science during the "Take A Chance" sledding race at the 2012 Solfestuka festival. The traditional contest is being eliminated this year due to lack of interest.

Solfest takes a new chance

SUNNY, from page 1

day of snow activities due to decreasing interest in the competition. The snow itself is a concern since the freakishly warm winter means there isn't much covering the ground.

And, of course, only a small handful of people know who and what will be loudly ridiculed on stage during the annual variety show spoofing the past year's events.

But plenty of traditional events will remain the same as Longyearbyen spends eight days welcoming the return of sunlight to the city. The first sunrise after the long polar night was Feb. 15, but the surrounding mountains means most of the city doesn't see rays until a few weeks later.

The ceremony welcoming the first sunshine (at least in theory, since it's been mostly overcast during recent years) is scheduled to begin at 11:30 a.m. on the old hospital steps at Skjæringa. Festival founder Louise Rigozzi will preside over an hour-long celebration of the event's 10-year mark, followed by the tradition of speeches and songs until the sun's scheduled appearance at 12:50 p.m.

The sledding contest, which has ranged from three people on a single ski to lavishly absurd contraptions with faux rocket engines, was nixed because only four people participated last year, said Stian Aadland, one of this year's organizers. Instead, there will be dogsled races, a ski jump contest and other activities.

"There will be a lot of different things, not just one thing," he said.

Detailed descriptions of all events are available at www.solfest.no.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

Solfestuka schedule

Sunday

- 11 a.m.: Fastelavn Mass. Svalbard Church.
- 6 p.m.: Opening ceremony w/music by Marlene Mellum and debut of "Dancing Queen" exhibit by Birgit Eide. Galleri Svalbard.

Monday

- 5 p.m.: "Stars in Sight" youth talent competition. Kulturhuset.
- 8 p.m.: Solquiz. Barentz Pub.

Tuesday

- 10 a.m.: Solar activities for children ages 1.3 at Longyearbyen Library and ages 3-6 on the hill behind the Radisson Blu Polar Hotel.
- 7 p.m.: Mass by visiting priests Torbjørn Olsen og Pater Marek Michalski. Svalbard Church.
- 7:30 p.m.: Solcafe featuring singalong with the Store Norske Men's Choir. Huset.

Thursday

- 10 a.m.: Solar activities for youths ages 3-6. Longyearbyen Library.
- 11 p.m.: Concert by Taliban Airways. Kroa.

Friday

- 6 p.m.: Solfest carnival for juniors. Longyearbyen youth club.
- 7:30 p.m.: Variety show spoofing the past year's events in Svalbard. Huset.
- 9 p.m.: Solfest carnival for seniors. Longyearbyen youth club.
- 10 p.m.: Concert by the Dumdum Boys. Kulturhuset.
- 10 p.m.: Concert by the Bjørn Tyldum Trio. Huset.

Saturday

- 11:30 a.m.: 10-year anniversary celebration of Solfest w/ founder Louise Rigozzi. At the old hospital steps at Skjæringa, next to Svalbard Church.
- 12:30 p.m.: Ceremony welcoming the return of the sun, projected at 12:50 p.m. Skjæringa,
- 1 p.m.: Solfest social. Svalbard Church.
- 2 p.m.: Solfest games and other snow activities on the plain below Vei 238
- 4 p.m.: Culture cafe featuring performances by local youths. Kulturhuset.
- 7:30 p.m.: Variety show spoofing the past year's events in Svalbard. Huset.
- 10 p.m.: Concert by the Bjørn Tyldum Trio. Huset.

Sunday

- Noon: Outdoor Mass. Below the television antenna at Hiorthfjellet.

What's up

Feb. 26

6 p.m.: Movie: "Død Snø 2," Norwegian comedy, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

March 2-9

Solfestuka 2014, celebrating the return of sunlight to Longyearbyen. See schedule on this page.

March 2

11 a.m. Mass. Svalbard Church.

5 p.m.: Movie: "Kule Kidz Gråter Ikke," Norwegian children's film, all ages. Kulturhuset.

7 p.m.: "The Wolf of Wall Street," U.S. crime/drama, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

March 8

10:30 a.m. "Out and Running" youth snowmobile safety/navigation course. Outdoor day in Fardalen for participants in previous sessions.

March 9

5 p.m.: Movie: "Peabody and Sherman," U.S. animated/family film dubbed in Norwegian, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

7 p.m.: Movie: "300: Rise of an Empire" (3D), U.S. action/drama, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

March 10

8 p.m.: Trivia quiz. Barentz Pub.

March 13

6 p.m.: "Musical Highlights" performance by Longyearbyen School students, featuring works from "Annie," "The Lion King" and "Mamma Mia." Kulturhuset.

March 14-16

Winter Camp Svalbard for youths. Contact ingeborg.runde@lokalstyre.no for registration and details.

March 16

5 p.m.: Movie: "Peabody and Sherman" (3D), U.S. animated/family film dubbed in Norwegian, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

March 17

8 p.m.: Trivia quiz. Barentz Pub.

What's online

Icepeople.net provides daily updates of news about Svalbard and the world's polar regions, plus extras for articles from the print edition. Among the latest news:

- *Climate kills Barents' "friendship" ski race*
- *N. Sea oil key to Scottish independence?*
- *U.S. calls for limits on fishing in Arctic*
- *'Polar bear capital' on Google Street View*

Balloting is underway! Suggest categories and pick your winners for

The Best of Svalbard 2014

www.icepeople.net/bestofsvabard

(By the way, we'll be selling ads for this one so the winners can gloat and the losers can explain why we have our heads completely up our asses.)