



50K fine for bear film?

Viral video of attack on man in cage called disruptive; producer Jason Roberts' projects on hold

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

A Svalbard film producer is facing a 50,000-kroner fine for a documentary showing a polar bear attacking a cameraman in a cage, an excerpt of which became a viral internet hit.

Jason Roberts also faces delays and cancelation of current projects as Svalbard's governor is demanding extra details before considering approval of permits to bring film crews into the wild.

A controversial excerpt of the BBC documentary "The Polar Bear Family & Me" showing a bear attacking a cage containing narrator Gordon Buchanan became a worldwide internet hit at the beginning of the year. But concerns were immediately raised

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BBC TWO

A polar bear rattles an "ice cube" containing Gordon Buchanan in this controversial video clip from the BBC documentary "The Polar Bear Family & Me." The cage was provided by Svalbard's Jason Roberts.

Hermansen free; prison 'brutal'



STATSBYGG

A standard prison cell at the prison in Tromsø.

Former Store Norske leader expected jail to be like 'school camp'

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

Norway supposedly has the best prison conditions in the world, but don't tell that to Robert Hermansen.

The former Store Norske administrative director was released last Friday after spending 15 months in the prison in Tromsø for "gross corruption." In interviews with several media outlets, he said inmate brutality, a death threat and administrative



ROBERT HERMANSEN

failures were among his experiences. "Before I was locked up I thought involuntarily of imprisonment as a sort of school camp, where I could go home and pick up a book if I wanted," Hermansen, 74, told NRK. "But it definitely was not."

He said he was surprised by the brutality among inmates, "especially among the many foreigners" who fought to gain status in a hierarchical setting, and was threatened himself for failing

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Freezing under record pressure

Prolonged winter cold produces highest readings in more than a century, allow bears at Bjørnøya

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

No, you aren't weak if the abnormally frigid winter has you feeling pressure. In fact, there's been a record amount of it lately.

The highest atmospheric pressure readings since measurements began in the 1890s have been recorded during the past week over Svalbard and Greenland. Börge Johansson, a

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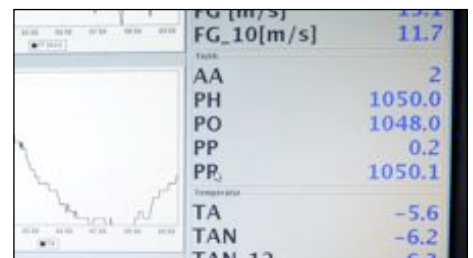


PHOTO BY BJØRN VIGELAND

An air pressure reading this week of 1050.1 hectopascals (PP) is the highest at the Bjørnøya Meteorological Station since measurements began in 1956.

Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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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.

Not just an Idol guy



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Kurt Nilsen, center, gets his bandmates to abandon their usual instruments during a concert Monday at Kulturhuset. A sold-out crowd about of 300 people watched the country/pop concert by the former plumber who won the first and only *World Idol* competition a decade ago.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

We figured **Jason Roberts' latest misadventure would bring out the internet fringe on the political left and right** since it offers an opportunity to either 1) be indignant about mistreatment of a species under threat or 2) be indignant about illegal tactics pushing yet more climate change propaganda. Sure enough, liberally strewn among more prosaic reader comments was a range of rants, beginning with those who didn't accept the premise of a polar bear being disturbed by a film crew taunting him with a guy inside a cage. "How many Polar Bears complained?" one wrote (we're not correcting capitalization or other errors in these). Another theory: "How do they know the bears were disturbed? Maybe they were simply bemused, or even entertained." Then there were the amateur critics, including one fan who wrote "I thought it was great. I would love to see more of it. We need more documentaries demonstrating the power and strength of wild animals. I would love to see a lion fighting a gorilla, or a crocodile versus a chimpanzee. I hope the BBC can be a bit more broad minded in future." A dissenting TV connoisseur sputtered "he should be fined, not for bothering the polar bears, but for producing the most appalling programme. Anthropomorphising the bears, even giving them stupid names and making up ridiculous faux dramas with the full heart rending musical score in the background." Also disgusted by the video was a science sleuth who asserted "film-makers use explosives to destroy glaciers so they can film huge chunks of ice crashing into the sea to 'prove' global warming." ... The final event tally seems close (3.5-2.5), but the reality is **Longyearbyen got utterly schooled by Bar-**



PER NILSSEN / SVALBARD TURN

Sure we've got a chance...and North Korea's going to win the World Cup: Might as well drink the vodka before the match if you expect to beat the Russians at chess on their own turf.

entsburg during the sports exchange in the Russian settlement in last Saturday. The tiny community of ex-Commies prevailed in basketball 57-16, volleyball 3-1 and chess 4.5-1.5. Longyearbyen ecked out wins at badminton and field hockey, but the visitors' real triumph was a 5-5 tie at soccer using players from the other sports due to illness among the regulars ... A standing-room-only crowd watched Efterklang's "The Ghost of Piramida" at UNIS on Friday, showing the three members of the Danish band running, banging and crawling around Pyramiden recording sounds for their "Piramida" album released last year. Not surprising, since we noticed they've gotten a ton of media coverage worldwide recently due to the film being made freely available to anyone agreeing to screen it. Alas, we haven't yet seen the full thing show up in a basic Google search, but **those who enjoyed the film or missed out can find some full-length Efterklang videos, including a concert with the Wordless Music Orchestra** in New York at www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4p5Cmpai7s.



BBC TWO

Polar bear cubs "Miki" and "Luca" rest on top of their mother, "Lyra," in the documentary "The Polar Bear Family & Me," which follows the animals for three seasons in Svalbard.

Roberts says he won't pay fine

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about the cage and nearby camera crews possibly violating laws prohibiting the disturbance of polar bears. The governor's office notified Roberts last week about the pending fine, giving him two weeks to respond.

"The cage was used to lure the bears and therefore disturb them, while they filmed the incident at the same time," wrote Lt. Gov. Lars Erik Alfheim in the citation.

Polar bears are a protected species in Svalbard, but are killed if they attack humans. Such action would have been necessary had the bear attacking Buchanan's cage broken through the plexiglass.

Roberts, in an interview with *Aftenposten*, declined to comment further Monday, said he rejects the fine because the cage doesn't violate environmental laws.

"I love (the polar bears) and have never bothered, disturbed, or harmed them," he said. "The law states that we are required to take protective measures that do not harm polar bears. That's why we used this cage. Polar bears are curious and them walking 50 meters to investigate cannot possibly be regarded as bothering them."

A BBC spokesperson, who declined to be named and recited a prepared statement, said "we are aware of these concerns, but as they refer to on-going discussions between the parties in Norway it would not be appropriate to comment further at this stage."

The documentary, featuring Buchanan following a polar bear family for three seasons



BBC TWO

Jason Roberts provides logistical support for a film crew in this promotional shot featured by the BBC for "The Polar Bear Family & Me."

in Svalbard, originally aired on BBC Two in January. The network has only posted excerpts at its website, but the full-length film is available at numerous YouTube URLs.

The incident is Roberts' second run-in with the governor during the past year. The producer was fined 10,000 kroner in December for forging an e-mail that allowed him to lease a helicopter to transport cargo for a project on Edgeøya last spring.

He submitted four applications for projects this winter and spring, but none have been approved yet because of the governor's demand for additional information, according to *Svalbardposten*. Alfheim, in an e-mail to Roberts, said detailed descriptions of each project's narrative and field work are necessary, noting descriptions of projects last year didn't necessarily match the final product.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Struggling Kulturhuset cafe eliminates daytime service

The cafe at Kulturhuset will eliminate its daytime service as of April 1 since "it's no secret that sales have not met expectations," said Trygve Steen, administrative director of Spitsbergen Travel. The company was awarded a controversial 10-year contract for the new cafe in 2012 requiring the company to invest two million kroner into the kitchen and pay rent only if sales exceeded four million kroner. Steen said sales were well below that last year and in 2011, compared to Fuene, which has 2011 sales of 6.5 million kroner. The Kulturhuset cafe, expected to be open daily, began operations with a full range of upscale sandwiches and other fare, but over time eliminated kitchen operations and relied on pre-made sandwiches and soup from the Radisson Blu Polar Hotel. Roger Ødegård, the city's cultural advisor, said he was disappointed, but defended the decision to award the contract to Spitsbergen Travel and said "the most important thing for us is to have a cafe that is open when there is cinema and events."

New EU rules make flying dogs to mainland 'untenable'

Transporting dogs from Svalbard to the mainland will be far more difficult starting May 1 due to new European Union regulations requiring veterinarian care first. Dogs must be treated for tapeworm between one and five days before departure, but the only veterinarian serving Longyearbyen visits three times a year. Also, a maximum of five dogs can be transported. Local dog owners said the rules present an "untenable" hardship for kennels, dogsled teams and sick animals needing treatment on the mainland.

More problems at Svea put mining on hold for two weeks

Coal mining at Svea was put on hold for two weeks due to problems with the concentration plant, resulting in a production loss of about 100,000 tons. Work was halted March 8 because miners were being heavily affected by dust during coal cleaning. The plant has been plagued with numerous problems since it went into operation in summer of 2011.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Clear. E winds to 32 km/h. High -10C (-16C wind chill), low -12C (-19C wind chill). Sunrise 5:51a; sunset 6:23p	Clear. Variable winds to 18 km/h. High -10C (-14C wind chill), low -12C (-17C wind chill). Sunrise 5:43a; sunset 6:30p	Cloudy. Variable winds to 29 km/h. High -7C (-12C wind chill), low -11C (-16C wind chill). Sunrise 5:35a; sunset 6:38p	Partly cloudy. Variable winds to 29 km/h. High -11C (-16C wind chill), low -18C (-23C wind chill). Sunrise 5:27a; sunset 6:45p
Extended forecast: Sunday, p. cloudy, -15C (-20C), -18C (-23C), light 13:33h; Monday, cloudy, -17C (-23C), -20C (-25C), light 13:49h; Tuesday, p. cloudy, -17C (-23C), -18C (-24C), light 14:04h; Wednesday, p. cloudy, -15C (-20C), -18C (-24C), light 14:20h			
Data provided by storm.no			

Still turning heads at 100



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Longyearbyen Mayor Christin Kristoffersen, right, discusses presentations Saturday at Kulturhuset during a conference celebrating the 100-year anniversary of women gaining the right to vote in Norway. Many of the speakers went beyond politics, focusing on historical topics such as the role of women during the explorer era, current work and cultural achievements, and goals for the future.

Hermansen returning to Svalbard

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to conform with expectations.

"I was scared and reacted instinctively," he told NRK, declining to provide details about the incident. "And paradoxically enough, it gave me enough a position in the hierarchy."

Hermansen, in an interview with *Aftenposten*, said prison officials were more concerned about policy and control than helping inmates rehabilitate.

"I think far more people could be given a chance to acquire a new environment and a new life," he said.

Hermansen was sentenced to two years in prison after confessing to charges related to his leadership of Store Norske from 1999 to 2008. Auditors found agreements he negotiated with subcontractors were unusually long and far above market value, and in his confession he acknowledged receiving about four million kroner in bribes. A fine of that amount, which

he still needs to pay, is part of his sentence.

Store Norkse, which became immersed in lengthy legal battles and eventually replaced the company providing infrastructure support in Svalbard, said the agreements may cost the company hundreds of millions of kroner.

Hermansen began serving his prison sentence in December 2011, spending the first half in an isolation cell for at least 22 hours a day. He eventually worked from eight to three in the laundry, spending the rest of his time reading, watching TV and training on a small mat in his cell.

He was hailed before the scandal for numerous achievements benefitting Store Norske and remains popular among many in Longyearbyen. He told reporters his first priority is returning to Svalbard with his family for a visit.

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

More pressure means more ice for bears

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Norwegian meteorologist, told *Adressa* it's the result of "a long period of cold weather dominated by air masses and little wind."

"This allows the cold air to come to rest on the ground, and becomes heavy and compact," he said. "When there is such a heavy air mass it increases the pressure."

The prolonged cold, while causing various hardships for humans, has been a boon for polar bears as the generally receding Arctic ice sheet is extending farther south than recent years. The ice, which has reached Bjørnøya, resulted in the first reliable sighting of a polar bear at the meteorological station there in more than two years.

"There has probably been at least three different bears ashore on Bear Island in the past week," the station's log at bjornoya.org noted in a March 17 entry.

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



PHOTO BY VENKE IVARRUD

A polar bear leaves tracks inside an old stable during the first such visit to the Bjørnøya meteorological station in more than two years.

What's up

March 20

6 p.m.: Movie: "Oz, the Great and Powerful" (3D), U.S. adventure, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

March 22

6 p.m.: Preparatory discussion about March 24 confirmation and baptism Mass. Svalbard Church.

March 24

11 a.m.: Confirmation and baptism Mass. Svalbard Church.

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

8 p.m.: Movie: "Cloud Atlas," U.S. adventure/sci-fi, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

March 26

7 p.m.: Evening Mass w/ baptism. Svalbard Church.

March 27

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

March 28

7 p.m.: Holy Thursday Mass. Svalbard Church.

March 29

1 p.m.: Outdoor Mass for Good Friday. Vindodden.

March 31

11 a.m.: Easter Mass. Svalbard Church.

April 1

Q1 meter reading due.

6 p.m.: Movie: "Identity Thief," U.S. comedy/crime, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Stories We Tell," Canadian documentary, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

April 3

6 p.m.: Movie: "G.I. Joe: Retaliation," U.S. action/sci-fi, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

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:

- *Norway delays Jan Mayen oil opening*
- *Forecast: Crop-killing drought to worsen*
- *China seeks Arctic influence with cash*
- *Flying Spaghetti Monster: warming a hoax*