



Snow slide kills 1

Longyearbyen man found during intense search after avalanche hits popular snowmobiling area

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

A Longyearbyen man was killed when an avalanche several hundred meters wide struck a popular snowmobiling area in Fardalen on Saturday morning, triggering a large-scale search for victims, according to The Governor of Svalbard.

Emanuel Stor-
aunet, 21, a Norwegian citizen, and a snowmobile registered in his name were found early Saturday afternoon at the slide area about seven kilometers south of Longyearbyen, according to a statement by the governor's office.

Twenty rescuers from the Longyearbyen Red Cross and governor's office, a helicopter and an avalanche-trained dog spent several hours Saturday afternoon searching the area after being notified about the incident at 11:39 a.m.

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BRITISH SKY BROADCASTING GROUP

Dumbledore's revenge: Michael Gambon, above, best known for playing the gay wizard in five "Harry Potter" movies, trades his wand for a rifle to deal with the dark elements of "Fortitude," a 12-episode TV series based in Longyearbyen (but filmed in Iceland) that debuts Jan. 29. One media report says the show "may be the most anticipated TV series ever to be set in the Arctic." At right, expedition members struggle with equipment in "North Pole Ice Airport," a three-part documentary about the Barneo ice camp airing this month.



CHANNEL 5 BROADCASTING LTD.

SHOWBIZZY

New TV programs giving Svalbard big-time small-screen exposure

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Albus Dumbledore has been resurrected as Longyearbyen's senior-most resident, only he's suddenly not sure he recognizes the town at all.

Nor will lots of other longtime Svalbard inhabitants if they're viewing their neighborhood through a collection of new programs on TV and streaming video screens. Is it a seem-

ingly enlightened realm haunted by an underlying and deadly menace? A global commune built around a shared pillar of worship? A communist wasteland where toil and vodka are the most reliable sources of warmth?

Getting the most attention is "Fortitude," a 12-episode TV drama debuting Jan. 29 on British and U.S. networks. *The Arctic Journal* declares it "may be the most anticipated TV

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Loan plea: Yeas, nays and frays

Is the government planning to help Store Norske, cave in to greenies or sell half of Svalbard?

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

The prime minister wants to keep tapping the Arctic's energy resources at full speed despite huge price crashes. Opposing interests say it's embarrassing pleas to keep coal mining alive in Svalbard weren't rejected immediately. And some advertising guy earned 15,000 likes on Facebook in a couple of days for alleging the

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PERNILLE INGEBRIGTSEN / ARCTIC FRONTIERS
Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg speaks in favor of continuing energy production in the Arctic despite a low-price crisis during the Arctic Frontiers conference last week in Tromsø.

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.

Scaling the Drawn Wall



LONGYEARBYEN LOKALSTYRE

Climbers attempt to reach the top of the new rock climbing wall during its official debut Jan. 18 at Svalbardhallen. The redesigned wall features more variation and levels of challenge, as well as a collage of Svalbard-themed art by Stefan Nordlie. Planning for the redesign began in 2011 and work was done largely by volunteers, with funding provided by Longyearbyen's municipal government, local businesses and the Gjensidige Foundation.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

"Change the world" is a nice motivational motto for individuals, but frequently ends up being problematic when countries take the message to heart in the literal sense. Remaking the map was a thing around Svalbard during the past week or so, including **Norway's decision to arbitrarily redefine where the edge of the Arctic is**. Which, shockingly, was basically about making it cool to drill for oil and gas in more places just beyond our backyard. But since everyone else is doing that as well (more on that momentarily), **the oil folks deserve a hat tip for answering whether a lost Arctic continent similar to Atlantis is buried beneath our pristine waters**. The Norwegian Petroleum Directorate long assumed the sand and shale around Svalbard came from the sunken continent they dubbed Crockerland, according to *Finnmark Dagblad*. But researchers with the agency said studies during the past decade now reveal the deposits occurred about 230 million years ago, not 250 million, and for various long-word reasons that makes the old theory...well, a crock. Of course, good conspiracy theorists (oxymoron?) will argue this is all about keeping certain types from getting in a huff about oil drilling marring a lost world ...



MILITARYRUSSIA.RU

Penis substitute? Or just a coincidence our shirtless neighbor's new probe designed to assert his manhood is a phallic symbol?



NORWEGIAN PETROLEUM DIRECTORATE

Plato tectonics: The gods might be able to create a submerged continent, but it takes oil idols to make one vanish.

But if there is a secret wonder beneath our waters, **it's a decent bet the Russians are hushing it up as well given all the nuclear sub voyages they're taking these days in the neighborhood**. The latest to be revealed was by the "top-secret" *Losharik* deep-diving titanium sub last September along the Mendeleev ridge to help bolster the country's claim it owns the North Pole (and much more), according to the *Barents Observer*. And they be getting a bit possessive about that, since the crew returned with 500 kilograms of rocks ... Finally, in a case of "good intentions gone awry," **Michael Armstrong, a leader on the 2011 British expedition that resulted in the death of a teenager that was killed by a polar bear, has received a suspended prison sentence of 18 months for making an experimental "bear scarer" and a stun gun at his home he hoped would provide more effective protection**. A court found him in violation of U.K. weapon laws that would normally impose a five-year mandatory sentence, but granted leniency due to "exceptional" circumstances, including personal struggles since the attack.



VIEWPOINT STUDIOS

Coal miners prepare to start a shift in "Grumant: The Island of Communism," a documentary about Barentsburg that won the best feature award at Russia's 2014 ArtDocFest. The film, showing all aspects of an often-rough life in the Svalbard settlement, and is now available free on YouTube.

Svalbard a big star on small screens

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series ever to be set in the Arctic" and that "location is everything."

The location is not named Longyearbyen – the series' title is used as a substitute – but everything about the fictional town deliberately replicates the real one. Except what the residents are doing, of course, as "someone is killed in a 'horrific crime' and a cop from the U.K. is whisked into town to help sort it out," according to the newspaper. Shockingly, there will also be some kind of surreal science twist.

Among the stars is Michael Gambon, 74, best known for his role in the "Harry Potter" movies, who plays "a powerful, intelligent, independent and proud" photographer, according to a description at the show's website (tinyurl.com/lw3h4fa). But his longevity, both physical and residential, may not mean much in the face of current events.

"Fortitude" was filmed primarily in Iceland for cost and logistical reasons, although Producer Simon Donald and others traveled to Svalbard to cast the "extras."

"Polar bears is the other thing we really wanted," he told the *Fresno Bee*.

Those into real-life drama in real-life places can get their fill with "North Pole Ice Airport," three-part documentary about the Barneo ice camp debuting this month on Britain's Channel 5 network (tinyurl.com/qyct6vt). The

opening episode, shown for the first time last Wednesday, features Russian parachuting onto the ice at 89 degrees latitude north and setting up the camp in temperatures of minus 40 degrees. Subsequent episodes, airing Jan. 28 and 29, will feature various international groups at the camp attempting to reach the North Pole.

"Among the polar hopefuls are six U.K. office workers who are trekking to the North Pole to raise £250,000 for a children's health charity," an official description of the show notes. "A group of Japanese tourists are also on the way by helicopter for a luxury trip to the Pole."

The antithesis of luxury can be observed in a 54-minute documentary about Barentsburg titled "Grumant: The Island of Communism," an award-winning 2014 film now available free on YouTube (tinyurl.com/kavgwst). The latter part of the title is supposedly what tourists call the settlement, but whether that's true or not the film itself captures a remarkably candid look at all aspects of modern life in a community experiencing immense struggles.

There's relatively little dialogue, allowing those not proficient in Russian to follow the constantly shifting scenes between cheerless coal mine work, a medical emergency, social gatherings and domestic settings.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Private owners help dog population reach record high

A record 717 dogs were living in Svalbard at the end of 2014, nearly 100 more than at the end of 2013. "The increase in the past year is due to both the number of private dogs and dogs in commercial use increasing," said Elin Lien, senior natural resources manager for The Governor of Svalbard. "But the number of dogs in private ownership increased the most." There's also an increase in the number of "inside dogs" such as terriers, she said. There were 378 privately-owned dogs and 339 commercial canines at the end of 2014, according to official figures. There are 17 dogs in Ny-Ålesund and 15 in settlements other than Longyearbyen.

Teen wins dispute w/ police, can use moped w/out license

A 16-year-old boy has prevailed in a dispute with The Governor of Svalbard about whether a driver's license is required to operate a moped in the archipelago. The youth, who asked not to be named, was stopped by police in October for driving too fast and the officer subsequently stated a license was required because the moped weighed more than 150 kilograms. A law requiring a license took effect on the mainland in 2002, but the youth argued it did not apply to Svalbard. "I had studied the matter beforehand ... but nevertheless I was given driving ban by the governor and had to wait many months for a response," he said. Two national transportation agencies confirmed his assertion in December and Lt. Gov. Jens Olav Sæther offered an apology for the length of the dispute.

Cleanup cruises cancelled due to lack of grant funds

Plans for two cleanup cruises where paying passengers would collect trash on Svalbard's beaches have been canceled due to insufficient grant funds, according to The Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators, which was organizing the trips. AECO requested a grant of about 1.25 million kroner from the Svalbard Environmental Protection Fund, but received only 150,000 and AECO has decided to relinquish the funds.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Clear. SE winds to 45 km/h. High -15C (-20C wind chill), low -20C (-27C wind chill).	Cloudy. Variable winds to 39 km/h. High 11C (-16C wind chill), low -19C (-24C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. Variable winds to 32 km/h. High -19C (-25C wind chill), low -22C (-29C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. NE winds to 35 km/h. High -14C (-21C wind chill), low -20C (-27C wind chill).
24-hour darkness	24-hour darkness	24-hour darkness	24-hour darkness
Extended forecast: Sunday, cloudy, -12C (-18C), -14C (-20C), light 0:00h; Monday, p. cloudy, -13C (-19C), -17C (-23C), light 0:00h; Tuesday, cloudy, -16C (-23C), -17C (-24C), light 0:00h; Wednesday, cloudy, -16C (-22C), -18C (-24C), light 0:00h			
Data provided by storm.no			



ARLID LYSSAND / SYSSELMANNEN

A helicopter helps 20 rescuers search for possible victims after an avalanche several hundred meters wide fell onto a popular snowmobiling trail in Fardalen on Saturday morning. Rescuers found one man killed by the slide quickly, but no other people during the five-hour search.

Gov.: Avalanche risk still high

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by snowmobilers arriving at the site.

"We had reports that the entire mountain-side had come loose," said Vidar Arnesen, a police chief lieutenant for the governor, in an interview with TV2.

The search was called off at about 5 p.m., with one area unexamined, due to the risk of additional slides at that spot.

"Based on the search in the area and other

investigation there is no indication more people were caught," the statement notes. "There is still an avalanche danger in the area. The governor is discouraging people from driving in Fardalen due to the current situation."

A cold spell in the area has been followed by warmer temperatures with wind, rain and sleet, increasing the risk of avalanches.

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

Pols support loan as media balks

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government is planning a mass sale of assets, including half of its land in Svalbard.

In short, the reaction to Store Norske's request for a 450-million-kroner bailout so the company can continue operating beyond the next couple of months is a lot like the long-running debate about mining here, only louder.

Energy production in Norway's Arctic has been a hot topic during the past week due largely to the annual Arctic Frontiers conference that started in Tromsø last Monday, three days after Store Norske made its loan request. Prime Minister Erna Solberg, who has said she favors keeping the company alive without specifically supporting their loan, told the conference she's committed to aggressively pushing Norway's resource development in the north. While her comments referred specifically to oil and gas exploration, several analysts suggested her prioritizing economic interests over environmental ones bodes well for the coal company.

More definitive support for the loan is being voiced by the Labor and Progress parties, who note the debate is also about other issues such as national security.

"We cannot let Svalbard and Svalbard's economic engine die," said First Vice President Øyvind Korsberg, a Progress Party member, in an interview with *Dagens Næringsliv*. "Store Norske is crucial in regards to whether Norway will have a presence in Svalbard or not."

Opposition is being voiced by the Green Party and various environmental organizations, as well as numerous newspapers who argue in editorials there's little hope coal mining can become profitable in Svalbard again.

"An (alternative) plan and money to implement it should be pursued now," a *Nordlys* editorial declared, adding coal mining "is in every way a dying species."

Store Norske asserts the loan, along with layoffs and reduced operations, will allow the company to continue mining if coal prices average \$65 a ton, compared to the \$83 a ton needed to break even last year. But prices plunged to about \$70 when the company declared itself in crisis in October and have dropped nearly \$20 a ton since.

As with many debates involving Svalbard, there's also more eclectic arguments making the rounds, sometimes to a surprisingly receptive audience.

Ingebrigt Steen Jensen, an advertising consultant, attracted a huge number of fans and media attention after publishing a Facebook page (tinyurl.com/ksnu97h) accusing the government of planning a mass sale of assets, including "half of Svalbard," to private interests. Conservative Party leaders have said they favor the sale of some state-owned companies, but Jensen's claims are wildly exaggerated and no such land sale is planned.

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

What's up

Jan. 26-Feb. 6

"The History of Svalbard," free course at UNIS. First class begins Jan. 26 at 4:15 p.m. Details at tinyurl.com/occupyvh.

Jan. 27

7 p.m.: Evening Mass and fireplace social. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Svalbard Seminar: "Ny-Ålesund and Longyearbyen in the future." UNIS.

8 p.m.: Girl's night for seniors in class eight to 18 years of age. Longyearbyen Youth Club.

Jan. 28

6 p.m.: Movie: "Blackhat," U.S. action/drama, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

Jan. 29

7:30 p.m.: Musical/comedy play: "On Thin Ice" by Børge Ousland and The Canoes, exploring Ousland's extreme expeditions. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Svalbard Seminar: "Life on the Bottom" and "Svalbard's Surging Glaciers." UNIS.

Jan. 31

Noon: Puppet show: "Little Blue and the Music Box," performed by the Dårkisten Theater. Kulturhuset cafe.

1 p.m.: Movie: "Big Hero 6" (3D), U.S. animated/comedy dubbed in Norwegian, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

1 p.m.: Longyearbyen Hunting and Fishing Association's annual meeting and banquet. UNIS.

Feb. 1

5 p.m.: Movie: "Big Hero 6," U.S. animated/comedy dubbed in Norwegian, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

7 p.m.: Movie: "Unbroken," U.S. crime/drama, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

Feb. 2

7 p.m.: Presentation about Norway's labor unions during the past century by former leader Yngve Hågensen. 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:

- *Warming forcing polar bears further north*
- *Drillers find 'lost world' under Antarctic ice*
- *U.S. seeks Finland's help for Arctic goals*
- *Climate puts Doomsday Clock at 11:57p*