Shakeup aboard the Lance as crew change occurs as breakup of ice causes 'complete chaos'

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Being researchers, it was certainly exciting discovering a new concept of "shift change."

A new team of scientists and crew members is working aboard the Lance research vessel with the reassurance it's solidly frozen into the sea ice at a safe northern latitude. But their initiation was anything but tranquil as the final hours of the departing participants were shook up by the ice around the vessel breaking up well to the south of its present location.

"Did you feel that?!" yelled a safety guard while those aboard were relaxing after their final dinner of the voyage, according to a Feb. 17 entry by project leader Harald Steen at the expedition's official blog (tinyurl.com/o3ard27).

"It was just a little movement in the boat, I felt it too," Steen wrote. "We rushed to the window and saw that there were cracks by the ship-side, and the SODAR (a meteorological instrument) was about to end up in the drink."

Eight people rushed out on the ice – one of whom watched for polar bears, another overseeing the work and monitoring safety – to collect the gear and bring it back to the ship, Steen wrote.

See BREAKUP, page 4

Ready or not?

Governor cites better ability to handle emergencies as a top feat of '14, but other crises loom

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

The Governor of Svalbard did a pretty good job of improving its ability to deal with emergencies, but that may not offset a lot of unplanned incidents that happen at the local and national levels in the future.

The governor's annual report for 2014, released last week, highlights improvements such as a new service vessel, a second full-size rescue helicopter, a new hanger and more police officials assigned to a wider range of duties among of the year's main achievements.

"Taken together, this means a big boost for preparedness," the report states.

But rescue equipment and personnel won't help with many of the challenges the Governor's office assigned to a wider range of duties among of the year's main achievements.

See PREPARED, page 4

random weirdness

Yet more 'polar bears are cuddly' insanity

Page 2

Cosmic achievement

Spacy students score under the lights

Page 3

Pyramiden prospects

A robot on a roller coaster, or let it rot?

Page 5

Circus atmosphere

High-wire act sends four to UKM in Tromsø

Page 6
To coldly go where no man….  

Xavier De Le Rue flies above Atomfjella in northern Spitsbergen using a paramotor – a paraglider with a petrol-powered propeller attached to the pilot's back – during a two-day journey as part of his "Missions" film series. "Degrees North," scheduled for release this fall, features footage of De Rue and riding partner and Samuel Anthamatten in an area that "allowed the (film) crew to fly low and slow into regions where no other form of transport is possible," according to a promotional feature at tinyurl.com/njt6bux. The second part of the movie is being filmed in Alaska this winter.

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

The rehabilitation of Robert Hermansen continues to progress nicely. A once-secret bust of the former Store Norske leader who spent 18 months in prison for corruption is now displayed prominently at the entrance of Karlsberger Pub (a much cooler fate than its twin, which is in storage at Svalbard Museum after being banished to an unlived corner of city hall). He's hanging out at the table of blue-collar regulars at Fruene every morning. Now there's word – actually a lot of highly complimentary ones – he'll be one of the featured presenters at a business conference in Sunnyvale in June. "He has received much of the credit for having made Norwegian coal mining in Svalbard profitable and is described as a pure miracle man," an article in Aura Avis notes. The newspaper notes he resigned from Store Norske "due considerable media attention surrounding a crime he committed," but "today there is a crisis for coal mining in Svalbard and many of the workers are longing for the time when Robert Hermansen was the director". There's been some grousing about how the new breed of thrifty-minded tourists are remarkably ignorant about polar bear precautions (or even that they exist here, in at least one case), but maybe that's because of the absurdly misleading stuff that keeps appearing on movie and TV screens. The latest "really, really

Two big brass ones: Nobody knew about the second until the subject himself gave it to a bar, figuring they'd cherish him more than official authority types who decided he ought to be in jail.

\textit{don't try this at home} project is "My Friend Nanuk," a straight-to-DVD film scheduled for release March 26. An article at movietele.it (tinyurl.com/np3l3rg) notes "the protagonist is Luke, a 14-year-old teenager who will try to bring a polar bear cub, renamed Nanuk, to its mother. The two establish an extraordinary relationship of affection and complicity: playing, helping and protect themselves." We're guessing official authority types would frown on taking a long journey across northern Canada relying on your cuddly companion to help face "snow storms, herds of polar bears and giant icebergs." Then there's Act II of the madness: the polar bear footage is too dangerous. That warning may be re-

Cruising: Getting out of Svalbard is too dangerous. That warning may be re-

A woman wearing a tiara with a purple bow is shown. The text reads, "Another cruise season is about to embark on."

B Briefly

The competition to be the Dumbest Svalbard Tourist Cap-

pppp

Get some real dirt on icepeople!

\textit{NORWEGIAN POLAR INSTITUTE

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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.
Totally cosmic forecast, man

UNIS students help launch a rocket ‘through’ northern lights to study signal-disrupting activity

By MARK SABBATINI

Editor

In space, no one can hear you scream the weather forecast. But it might be nice to know so we’re not silenced on Earth as well.

A rocket launched “through” the northern lights with help from students monitoring auroral conditions at the EISCAT Svalbard Radar might make cosmic forecasts possible, allowing analysts to spot activity that can cause trouble for navigation and communication in northern regions.

“Based on the ground instruments, it looked like we were able to hit a perfect target - the space weather phenomenon we were aiming for,” a post at the project’s official Facebook page (www.facebook.com/ici4rocket) declared 17 minutes after the launch at 11:06 p.m. Friday.

The ICI4 rocket carrying seven scientific measuring instruments conducted a 10-minute flight over the Barents Sea, reaching a peak altitude of 362 kilometers, before crashing into the ocean, according to a mission summary issued by UNIS. The instruments were designed to “take in-situ measurements of high density electron clouds (so-called polar cap patches) which drift across the polar cap at auroral altitudes,” which disrupt GPS and other signals at high latitudes.

Students working at EISCAT spent several weeks designing and running experiments to monitor various aspects of auroral activity, according to Maxime Grandin, a researcher at the university.

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

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Forecast</th>
<th>Sunrise</th>
<th>Sunset</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Cloudy. W winds to 22 km/h. High -9C (-14C wind chill), low -14C (-22C wind chill).</td>
<td>9:01a</td>
<td>3:19p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Partly cloudy. Variable winds to 18 km/h. High -10C (-15C wind chill), low -17C (-22C wind chill).</td>
<td>8:51a</td>
<td>3:28p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Partly cloudy. NW winds to 22 km/h. High -11C (-18C wind chill), low -17C (-22C wind chill).</td>
<td>8:42a</td>
<td>3:38p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>Partly cloudy. NW winds to 22 km/h. High -12C (-17C wind chill), low -13C (-20C wind chill).</td>
<td>8:32a</td>
<td>3:47p</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extended forecast: Sunday, snow. -11C (-16C), -12C (-17C), light 7:32h; Monday, snow, -11C (-17C), -12C (-18C), light 7:49h; Tuesday, cloudy, -10C (-16C), -11C (-18C), light 8:07h; Wednesday, cloudy, -9C (-13C), -10C (-15C), light 8:24h.

Data provided by storm.no

Circumstances of mining accident remain unknown

The cause of an accident at the coal mine in Barentsburg that seriously injured and possibly paralyzed a Ukrainian man remains unclear a week after it occurred, according to investigators. The man in his 40s was injured Feb. 18 in a mishap apparently involving a conveyor belt, although it’s unknown if the machinery was operational at the time – or even precisely where the victim was. “There were no eyewitnesses to the incident, only ‘earwitnesses,’” said Arild Lyssand, a police chief inspector for The Governor of Svalbard.

He said interviewing the man, who is hospitalized in Svalbard, “is going to be critical.”

Spitsbergen Travel joins rush to build new hotels

Spitsbergen Travel is planning to build a new hotel at a yet-undetermined site in Longyearbyen, joining three other new hotels that will add up to 400 rooms to the city’s lodging capacity during the next few years.

Spitsbergen Travel officials said they don’t fear competition from those, but instead are planning to build one themselves. Officials at the company said they’re not worried about the other hotels causing a glut in vacancies and a drop in rates due to competition. “It provides an increased focus on Svalbard as a tourist destination, creating an increased interest from a wider audience,” said Anne-Margrethe Tveit, the company’s hotel director.

Tally of snowmobile traffic to start south of town soon

A tally of snowmobile traffic in and out of Longyearbyen will be kept by government officials are planning to set up soon, according to The Governor of Svalbard. Guri Tveito, head of the governor’s environmental department, said it is the same equipment used to count cars, bikes and other traffic on the mainland, although it has not been tested in Svalbard’s extreme climate. The Ministry of Climate and Environment commissioned the tally to better track traffic volume in the archipelago. The initial monitor will be at the south end of town on the way to Longyearbreen, with additional sites planned in the future. 
Lance may gain despite work lost

PREPARED, from page 1

Governor's gains in '14 hurt by coal crisis

Governor's office may face this year and in the near future.


Store Norske laid off about 100 of its 340 workers and Longyearbyen officials estimate the city could lose up to 250 residents when family members and additional layoffs in supporting industries are factored in. The coal company is waiting for Parliament to consider a 450-million-kroner loan request that will allow operations to continue beyond the next few months.

While environmental activists may not be pleased by the likely approval of the loan, tougher regulations enacted in other areas is another of the main achievements highlighted in the governor’s report. A new management plan for east Svalbard that redefines zones of access with much higher restrictions on access was hailed as a "milestone" and a new management plan for west Svalbard was submitted to the Norwegian Environment Agency for approval.

"The main objective is to preserve Svalbard's unique natural wilderness, but within this framework open the way for research, tourism, fishing and hunting, recreation, and other uses of nature," Ingerø wrote.

The governor's office, in addition to new equipment and personnel, also received a new annex of its main administration building that is partially complete and scheduled for completion by mid-2015.

"The extension provides a necessary expansion of the space, better meeting capacity, new arrest facilities as well as a new modern operating rooms for police," Ingerø wrote.

But a police force that dealt with about 100 criminal incidents in 2014 – nearly all minor – probably will need more than a little assistance if the world fears of some national and international officials are realized.

An article in The Guardian this week notes Norway is planning a complete restructuring of its military due to Russia’s increasing aggressive actions in northern areas of the region. Some analysts are suggesting Svalbard – where Russia has announced major expansion plans for tourism and research – may be a target since the country disputes Norway’s claims of sovereignty in the archipelago.

The governor's report, in one of many statistical tallies and charts, notes Ingerø and other officials hosted 40 briefings and six dinners for visiting international leaders and dignitaries.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.
A future in the past

Winners of design contest have radically opposite concepts for preserving Pyramiden's history

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

A robot riding a roller coaster certainly qualifies as a "radical idea" for preserving the long-abandoned mining settlement of Pyramiden.

Two students at Lund School of Architecture have the prize to prove it. Norway's Jarand Nå and Sweden's David Ottosson were named the winners of this year's "120 Hours" competition, which challenges aspiring architects to develop a concept and design in five days.

Their project, "Remember Work?" is as much a philosophical discussion as design concept. The text description on the four-page brochure submitted by all entrants begins by noting historical attitudes about work and how they applied to Pyramiden during its mining days decades ago.

"In Soviet propaganda, increasingly efficient work was portrayed as the means of deliverance – the bringer of international communism," the description notes. "And it was a faith with many saints. A coal miner – Alexey Stakhanov – was said to have completed 14 times his quota on a work shift, and became a primary symbol for Soviet spirit."

Nå and Ottosson declare the advance of machinery is affecting many of those ideals and therefore propose "Pyramiden is given a lone inhabitant – a worker."

"And the newcomer is the quintessential worker – a robot – its very name derives from the Russian word for work," they wrote. "So we have a former coal mining colony, occupied by a repurposed industrial robot."

"The robot and the coal mining are both impractical concepts in the north, but like a true inhabitant of modernity, the robot might be reprogrammed to work in hospitality, curation, or to maintain a video feed."

But, they conclude with a return to philosophy, if robots are doing activities such as videotaping polar bears "and nobody watches the live feed, are they really working?"

Second place was awarded to three Czech students with a radically different vision – preserve Pyramiden's future by doing essentially no work there. Instead, Matyáš Švejdík, Marek Nedelka and Pavel Špringl suggest merely allowing people to observe work done by nature.

"For this we are designing four small objects around Pyramiden which will serve as residential observatories," they wrote in the summary of their project "Axis of Pyramiden." "Therefore, the village of Pyramiden, in our approach, is becoming observatory of the change – the change from human inhabited piece of land back to the land of nature."

This year's contest, which attracted a record 2,700 participants, was the first since students at The Oslo School of Architecture and Design started the competition in 2010 that focused on an area beyond mainland Norway. The entries can be seen at 120hour.no.

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

UNIS getting second dorm close to campus

80-unit hostel similar to complex that opened last fall: officials seeking third dorm in near future

A lot more students will be walking a lot less in the not-too-distant future, as The University Centre in Svalbard is receiving funds for a new housing complex across the street from campus, according to the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research.

The ministry announced its approval of 2,000 student units nationwide Monday. The new 80-unit hostel at UNIS will be similar to a new 88-unit building that opened last fall.

Students have traditionally walked about three kilometers to housing units in Nybyen, but UNIS officials are hoping to eventually build a third dorm near the campus so all students will be in the new complexes.

The new dorms have upgraded furnishing and technology, but some students say they prefer the old buildings because the new ones lack a communal space other than the dining area.

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

Quartet performing acrobatic circus routine represents half of the winners of local UKM contest

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

"This is the end" may not be the first words parents want to hear while watching their kids dangle dangerously from scarves high above the stage floor. But for the observers who really matter, it works.

The four teenagers performing the final act of this year's local UKM competition Sunday at Kulturhuset were among the eight Longyearbyen youths selected to advance to the regional stage in Tromsø in April.

Thale Snibsøer, 14, Sunniva B. Meek, 15, Live Skattum, 14, and Nora Tveit-Pinney, 13, performed their "Sirkus" routine to the ominously named pop song "Skyfall" by Adele, which was among the factors cited by the panel of judges picking the performance as one of their favorites.

"Great potential," the panel wrote in their collective comments. "Good music choice. Allows the audience to enjoy the performance."

The only hitch, they noted, was having all four teens on the scarves for the finale: "a little too busy?"

A YouTube video of their performance is available at tinyurl.com/om2d4un.

Among the other winners was Pauline Skreslett, 15, who was deemed worthy of advancing for two separate performances. She and Vilde Markussen, 16, performed a duet version of "The Brothel" by Norwegian pop star Susanne Sundfor, and the judges gave it rather high acclaim compared to the original chart-topping version.

"They do well with each other," the judges comments. "Many elements. Good timbre. Variety. Susanne Sundfor must beware."

Skreslett was also honored for her piano/vocal performance of Christina Perri's "The Lonely."

Other winners include Therese Bjerkeng, 16, for photo series "Dans i Polarnatten" and Sindre R. Blindheim, 13, for her art exhibit "Fiskefluer."

The winners in Tromsø will advance to the national competition in Trondheim in June. There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

Viljar: Book not 'a slap in the face'

'Descriptions of what happened cannot be worse than what I experienced,' Utøya survivor says

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Apparently "most Norwegians" are angry story of Viljar Hanssen and other victims of Anders Breivik is being told in such great detail. But the former Longyearbyen youth who lost his eye and nearly his life in the 2011 terrorist attacks doesn't regret having his physical and mental scars exposed to the world.

His experience during the July 22 mass shooting at the Utøya youth camp is detailed in the book "One of Us" by Åsne Seierstad, which is making its debut in English early next month after being released in Norwegian in 2013.

"Seierstad has received critical acclaim for the book, but in an interview she notes that the book is a 'slap in the face' for most Norwegians, whom she said would simply like to forget that something so terrible ever happened," a review in The Foreigner noted. Elements ranging from the title – which she said describes an assailant who appeared to be a seemingly normal member of Norwegian society – to asserting authorities acted incompetently responding after the bombing and before Breivik reached Utøya have generated controversy.

Exposing the struggles of relatives and survivors, with some of the latter struggling with problems such as substance abuse, also generated some negative reactions. But Hanssen, who recently graduated from the University of Tromsø, has openly discussed his struggles since the tragedy and said "descriptions of what happened cannot be worse than what I experienced."

"Therefore I do not think it is so bad to read about it," he told Nordlys during an interview when the book was originally released. "Not least because of the future. It is important that evolves from how things were."

Among his experiences detailed in the book is a visit from a friend after he'd been hospitalized in a coma during the six days following the attack. After talking for a bit, the friend started singing a song that "bad long been an internal joke" among camp participants from the north.

"On second verse, Viljar woke," Seierstad wrote. "With a smile."

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.
Because folks into Svalbard are so awesome at it, it's the

![icepeople logo]

fundraising telethon

For six years we've been bringing you skewed news and views of the world's coolest place for free. But we can't pay for this out of our rapidly thinning pocketbooks forever, so we've bitten the bullet and added donation and advertising stuff to our newly redesigned website. Consider this our polite, not-resorting-to-porn-ads plea to consider "subscribing" or allowing thousands of readers worldwide to learn about your wares and talents.

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Or that a lot of our "real" newspapers have been larger in size lately

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Eclipse won't dim Solfestuka

SUNLIGHT, from page 1

day festival. Organizers said their plans weren't affected by what's expected to draw the largest crowd ever to visit the archipelago only a couple of weeks later.

One difference from most years is an afternoon of outdoor sun-related activities on March 7 will take place on the ski hill across from Longyearbyen School instead of locations further from town due to a lack of snow, said Roger Ødegård, the city's cultural advisor.

T-shirts and other merchandise with a logo drawn by Nora H. Navdal, 11, who won this year's design contest, are displayed at the reception area of the Longyearbyen municipal government building. Navdal will also be honored during the return of the sun ceremony March 8 at Skjæringa.

What's up

Feb. 24
7 p.m.: Candlelight Mass w/ candidates for Confirmation. Svalbard Church.

Feb. 25
7 p.m.: Concert: "Klassisk Brus" by pianist Anne Sofie Godø and violinist Erika Toth. Svalbard Church.

Feb. 28

March 1

March 8
5 p.m.: Movie: "Amazonia," British/U.S. adventure/family, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.
7 p.m.: Movie: "Foxcatcher," U.S. drama, ages 14 and up. Kulturhuset.

March 9
8 p.m.: Trivia quiz. Barentz Pub.

March 10
7 p.m.: Longyearbyen Community Council meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.
7:30 p.m.: Concert by pianist Leif Ove Andsnes and baritone vocalist Matthias Goerne, featuring "Schwanengesang" by Franz Schubert. 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:

- U.S. sea level rose five inches in two yrs.
- Warming likely to speed up after 'pause'
- Climate skeptic gets $1.2M from Big Oil
- Alaska village relocating due to warming

Solfestuka 2015 schedule

**Sunday**

Noon: Outdoor Mass at Hiorthfjellet. Subject to snow and weather conditions.
3 p.m.: "Vindtrollet" ("The Wind Troll") music/telling performance by Morten Marland, Signi Sandberg and Liv Mari Schei. Kulturhuset.
6 p.m.: Official Solfestuka opening ceremony by Øyvind Sniibe. Musical performances by Torunn Slettemark Hovden and Randi Margrethe Mathiasdatter Larsen. Also features the debut of the sculpture exhibit "Resilient Life – Persistent Death" by Trond Kasper Mikkelsen, and the exhibit "Lys" ("Light") by the Longyearbyen Photo Club. Galleri Svalbard.

**Monday**

8 p.m.: Solquiz. Grand prize is tickets to Saturday's D.D.E concert. Barentz Pub.

**Tuesday**

10 a.m.: Solar activities for children ages 1-3 years. Longyearbyen Library.
10 a.m.: Solar activities for children ages 3-6 years. On the hill behind the Radisson.
7 p.m.: Catholic Mass by Pastor Marek Michalski. Svalbard Church.

**Thursday**

10 a.m.: Solar activities for children ages 3-6 years. Longyearbyen Library.
5 p.m.: Solfest performance by Longyearbyen youths. Kulturhuset.
11 p.m.: Concert by Blues in a Cop. Kroat.

**Friday**

6 p.m.: Solfest carnival for juniors. Longyearbyen Youth Club.
7:30 p.m.: Performance "Wow - A New Coal Age," spoofing the year's past events. Huset.
9 p.m.: Solfest carnival for juniors. Longyearbyen Youth Club.
10 p.m.: Live music at Huset.

**Saturday**

2 p.m.: Outdoor sun activities including sledding, skiing and live performances. Skiing hill across from Longyearbyen School.
4 p.m.: Cafe hosted by local cultural students. Kulturhuset cafe.
7:30 p.m.: Performance "Wow - A New Coal Age," spoofing the year's past events. Huset.
10 p.m.: Concert by D.D.E. Kulturhuset. Free bus from Huset will be available.
10 p.m.: Solfest party on two floors. Huset.

**Sunday (March 8)**

11 a.m.: Family Mass w/ performance by Polargospel. Svalbard Church.
12:30 p.m.: Ceremony welcoming the return of the sun. Old hospital steps at Skjæringa.
1 p.m.: Solfest social. Svalbard Church.
7 p.m.: "Soltener" concert featuring local trumpet/piano duo and a vocal quartet. Svalbard Church.

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