



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, right, accepts a gift from Pranam "Lek" Ubonrat, a housekeeper at Basecamp Spitsbergen for the past 12 years, while meeting with about 75 of Longyearbyen's Thai residents Tuesday at Spitsbergen Hotel. Thais are by far the city's largest non-Norwegian population.

Big on beer, butts

Alcohol, tobacco use by teens in Longyearbyen far higher than mainland, according to survey

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Longyearbyen youths are using alcohol and tobacco in much higher percentages than their peers on the mainland, and it appears the problem is growing, according to a survey and activists trying to find solutions.

The survey found one-third of Longyearbyen's middle school students have consumed alcohol to the point of intoxication, which is roughly double the mainland average.

"That is a Norwegian record, as far as I can see," said Øystein Henriksen of the survey's organization, Kompetansesenter Rus, during a presentation to Longyearbyen parents, students and youth workers Tuesday at Kulturhuet, according to *Svalbardposten*.

The survey states 44 percent of Longyearbyen boys and 37 percent of girls at the middle and high school levels have been intoxicated within the past six months. About 25 percent of boys and 13 percent of girls are allowed by their parents to drink alcohol.

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Thai highness

Thailand princess finds intrigue in cleaners and climate experts alike during Longyearbyen visit

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

It's about 60 degrees Celsius colder than her homeland, but warmth didn't seem to be a problem for Thailand Princess Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn.

The second daughter of the king is finding – and giving – it in the company of cleaners and climate scientists alike during a three-day visit to Svalbard. Known as the "Princess of Technology" due to her interest and expertise in applying science toward the country's development, her visit's stated purpose is observing climate change impacts and research in the Arctic.

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No wait, no weight, no late fees

Longyearbyen Library part of first e-book collection offered in Norway, but titles are few so far

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

With tiny homes, high shipping costs and limited average residencies, Longyearbyen probably isn't an ideal first choice for a book lover looking to build a large collection. But it's a perfect place for the first e-book collection offered by a Norwegian library.

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TROMS SAMSØK

The website offering a new e-book collection from Longyearbyen Library has a (limited) English display option, but the books are all in Norwegian.

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.

Sun shows a strange sense of humor



Longyearbyen's younger students, above, sing a tribute to the sun, despite minus 25-degree Celsius cold, Friday at Skjæringa as part of the week-long Solfestuka festival. At right, Ottar Svensen, left, shows off his "tatoos" while singing "The Old Are Eldest" with Torgeir Mørk and Laurits Finjord during a variety show satirizing the past year's news Saturday at Huset. Photos by Mark Sabbatini / Icepeople.



Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Since our unpaid carcasses are back to obsessing about getting entertained for free (and at least semi-legally), we thought we'd go from the high-minded concept of books on page one to the lowbrow of "Idol" pop in this deserving space. One of Norway's longtime legends, Åge Aleksandersen, passed through town last week and relative newbie notable Kurt Nilsen is doing a gig next Monday. With tickets for each sub-two-hour concert selling for nearly 400 kroner, we're guessing a lot of fans and potential groupies are missing out. But being frequent freeloaders, we're noting **there's great opportunities to hear live performances by both without depriving you even of your freedom, let alone your paycheck.** Aleksandersen is performing a televised concert Wednesday on NRK that will be rebroadcast Saturday. Nilsen, a country/pop singer who was winner of the first Norwegian *Pop Idol* in 2003, can be seen and heard on a large number of full-length concert YouTube videos that we'll assume exist there legally. Same goes for Aleksandersen, by the way, just in lesser numbers. As for the many torrents and pirate sites that turn up by Googling "free album download," we wash our hands of any such activity ... It's probably best the media (OK, just us)



ERNST VIKNE / WIKICOMMONS

His albums are free at mp3skull.com, but we're officially only mentioning Kurt Nilsen can be heard live Monday at Kulturhuset for a hefty price or free at about 1,720,000 YouTube links.

didn't get to ask Thailand Princess Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn any questions during her visit to Longyearbyen, since we'd have undoubtedly committed some gross violation of protocol. Among the things our inquiring minds were wondering: how did she feel hearing so many of her subjects (many highly educated) are working as cleaners here, did she get "snowmobile sick" riding for the first time (as we did) in Ny-Ålesund and did she end up needing any of the emergency medical services she inquired in advance about?



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Kim Holmén, left, international director of the Norwegian Polar Institute, discusses climate research with Thailand Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn on Tuesday at The University Centre in Svalbard.

Cold doesn't chill Thai princess

SIRINDHORN, from page 1

But it was also a chance to meet Longyearbyen's famously large Thai community, as about 75 of the city's 100-plus residents from that country gathered at the Spitsbergen Hotel a few hours after the princess arrived Tuesday.

Packed tight around the walls of a large meeting room, residents curtsayed and bowed as they presented Princess Sirindhorn with flowers, notes, donations for causes she advocates and other gifts as she circled the room. Most of her subjects are in the humble occupations of commoners, but the princess found their stories anything but common.

She wanted to know "how everybody came here and what is everybody doing here," said Lek Wanwong Buer, who on weekends teaches her native language to Thai children who've lived in Svalbard most or all of their lives. "We said we clean here, one at the hotel, one at ISS, me at the power station."

A few residents said they met Princess Sirindhorn when she visited Tromsø some years ago, and thus knew the proper decorum for the occasion. Others got a quick briefing before her arrival, as the did the press who, among other things, was not among those allowed to speak to her.

The gathering occurred about an hour late, as did all of the princess' events during the day, as her flight from Tromsø was delayed due to ice on the plane's wings. There was also the

first-day disappointment of a poor Northern Lights forecast, not to mention the massive adjustment from the 35 degrees Celsius temperatures of her homeland.

"I heard from my field director, who said nearly 80 students were out in the field today, where it was minus 25, driving snowscooters," said Ole Arve Misund, director of The University Centre in Svalbard, during a presentation shortly after her arrival.

The princess, traveling with a delegation of about 15 people, showed cold environments aren't entirely a new concept, asking UNIS and other research leaders about things like Arctic toxicology and access issues. The conversation frequently reflected the intellect of a royal who speaks at least four languages fluently, is a teacher and nominal head of a military academy's history department. She also plays the trumpet and traditional Thai instruments such as the *ranat* (a type of xylophone).

Also scheduled during Princess Sirindhorn's visit is a tour of the Svalbard Global Seed Vault on Wednesday morning, where she will present three seed species representing Thailand's first deposit at the facility. She is then scheduled to fly to Ny-Ålesund for a tour of the international research station, plus a two-hour snowmobile trip to observe conditions and field research.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM **SVALBARDPOSTEN** VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Population chain still bears > people > snowmobiles > cars

There were 4,706 vehicles and 2,642 residents in Svalbard as of Jan. 1, a per-person ratio of 1.8 that is nearly twice the mainland's, according to Statistics Norway. But the total includes all types of vehicles, including 2,130 snowmobiles that represent one for every person legally old enough (at least 16) to drive them. While the statistics are not broken down by settlement, there are ten registered snowmobiles in Barentsburg, suggesting nearly all such vehicles are used in Longyearbyen and Ny-Ålesund. There were 1,248 cars, with the ratio of about one for every two people similar to the mainland average.

Water beneath waste facility contaminated, student finds

Water beneath Longyearbyen's waste facility is contaminated and leaking into Adventdalen, but is not a threat to the city's drinking water supply, according to a master's thesis by a student at The University Centre in Svalbard. Solveig Vullum Løtveit found nitrogen, manganese, zinc and nickel in the water, but in an e-mail stated she does not know if the concentrations are high enough to affect wildlife. Bydrift plans to hire a consultant this summer to study possible solutions to the problem.

Apartments instead of homes at Elvesletta Syd approved

Allowing LNS Spitsbergen to build small apartments rather than the family homes originally intended at Elvesletta Syd was approved Monday by Longyearbyen's Environment and Industry Committee. "We have waiting lists of up to 20 people who want one-bedroom and several inquiries from people who want two-bedroom apartments," said Ann Pedersen, LNSS' administrative director. Statistics Norway shows there were 623 households with one person, 233 households with two persons and 285 households with three or more people in Longyearbyen as of July 1, 2012. Concern about the switch was voiced by Lene Villumsen, a Bipartisan Party member of the committee, who said there may already be enough small residences in town to meet demand, but prices are too high.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Cloudy. N winds to 18 km/h. High -14C (-18C wind chill), low -17C (-22C wind chill).	Cloudy. E winds to 18 km/h. High -17C (-22C wind chill), low -21C (-27C wind chill).	Cloudy. E winds to 29 km/h. High -16C (-22C wind chill), low -20C (-26C wind chill).	Cloudy. E winds to 49 km/h. High -7C (-15C wind chill), low -16C (-23C wind chill).
Sunrise 6:45a; sunset 5:32p	Sunrise 6:38a; sunset 5:39p	Sunrise 6:30a; sunset 5:46p	Sunrise 6:22a; sunset 5:54p
Extended forecast: Sunday, cloudy, -7C (-14C), -11C (-20C), light 11:47h; Monday, snow, -8C (-18C), -11C (-20C), light 12:02h; Tuesday, cloudy, -5C (-8C), -8C (-12C), light 12:17h; Wednesday, cloudy, -4C (-10C), -6C (-13C), light 12:32h			
Data provided by storm.no			

A century of suffrage



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

About 25 women march with torches from the center of Longyearbyen to Huset on Friday in observance of International Women's Day. The procession, a new occurrence this year, was organized as an advance event to the 100-year anniversary celebration of women gaining the right to vote in Norway. A two-day gathering featuring presentations by modern and historical leaders, cultural performances and other activities is scheduled Friday and Saturday at Kulturhuset.

Council: Teen drinking increasing

UNDERAGE, from page 1

Svalbardposten reports there are also claims of hidden drinking at the city's youth club, house parties and dives with participants as young as 12.

Longyearbyen Youth Council members Lillian Maria Sæter and Marlene Mellum, in a letter to the newspaper, asserted the problem has long been common knowledge, but it is getting worse.

"The youth council finds that the number of house parties has increased over the past year," they wrote. "Alcoholic beverages are readily available, as are places to enjoy alcohol."

While youths should behave responsibly, "most of the responsibility lies with the parents" when it comes to a solution, the letter states. Locking up alcohol, imposing curfews and keeping in touch with other parents are among the recommendations.

"In order to have a party, you need two things: alcohol and a place to be," the letter notes. "If you remove one of the parts, you have already come a long way."

The survey is part of a national action plan, which includes prevention courses now being offered to local teachers and parents.

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

New e-book library small, but will expand

DIGITAL, from page 1

The digitally protected e-books went online Monday for libraries in the Troms region. So far, it's only a small collection of 169 books – including what appears to be a lot of recent mass-market thrillers – all of it in Norwegian and none of it having much to do with Svalbard.

"It's because of the publishers and authors," said Elisabeth Bergstrøm, head librarian at Longyearbyen Library. "They're afraid they will lose money on this."

For the same reason only five copies of each title are available for checkout at any one time, she said.

On the other hand, the e-books are available 24 hours a day worldwide to anyone with a national library card registered in the Troms region. There's also no worries about returns or late fees, as the books delete themselves after three weeks.

In addition, other media such as magazines, movies and music may eventually

be offered.

The books are in EPUB format, which are compatible with free reader software available for most computers and mobile devices. The e-book library's website is tinyurl.com/aabvf9.

For those looking for free e-books specific to Svalbard – or are unable to read Norwegian – there's a wealth of mostly non-fiction titles from organizations and individuals.

A search for "Svalbard," "North Pole" and "polar regions" turns up hundreds of historical, scientific and political titles at the Internet Archive (archive.org), such as the 1861 hunting travelogue "Seasons With the Seahorses" by James Lamont. An explosion in free online courses from universities means similar texts and lecture series are available.

On an individual level, one of the first Google hits for "free Svalbard e-book" is "Svalbard - Land of the Polar Bear" a photo collection that costs \$26.06 in print.

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

What's up

March 13

6 p.m.: Movie: "Django Unchained," U.S. drama/western, ages 18 and up. Kulturhuset.

March 14

5 p.m.: Door-to-door fundraising for Norwegian Church Aid, arranged by Svalbard Church.

March 15-16

100-year commemoration of women's right to vote. Historical and cultural presentations from 3:15-6:30 p.m. March 15 and 9:30 a.m.-6 p.m. March 16. Kulturhuset.

March 15

4:15 p.m.: Movie: "The Ghost of Pyramiden," multilingual documentary w/ English subtitles. Free. UNIS.

March 17

6 p.m.: Movie: "Silver Linings Playbook," U.S. drama/comedy, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

8:30 p.m.: Movie: "Jack Reacher," U.S. drama/crime, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

March 18

7:30 p.m.: Concert: Kurt Nilsen, Norwegian pop/country singer. Tickets 380/330 kr, details at lokalstyre.no.

7:30: Trivia quiz. Barentz Pub.

March 19

7 p.m.: Fireplace discussion w/ UNIS Director Ole Arve Misund and Priest Leif Magne Helgesen. Svalbard Church.

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.

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:

- *Oslo summit: Arctic melt boon or bane?*
- *Somalia famine result of climate change*
- *Greenland elects new pro-mining leader*
- *Oops: 'New' Antarctic life is contamination*