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Weather summary
Partly cloudy with moderate cold and winds through the weekend; clearing skies early next week.
Full forecast page 3

The world's northernmost alternative newspaper

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Peace of mine

Sovereignty worries, not business, may be main reason for 500M government bailout of Store Norske

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Norway's government wants to give Store Norske more bailout money than the nearly bankrupt coal company asked for, but the largesse may be more about self-preservation than generosity or good business sense.

A 500-million-kroner allocation to continue mining operations, 100 million more than Store Norske requested, is being recommended by the Ministry of Trade, Industries and Fisheries. The announcement of the bailout, combining a loan and the acquisition of some Store

Norske properties, coincides with a proposed increase in defense spending due to increasing tensions with Russia primarily resulting from aggressive efforts to expand its Arctic presence.

"It is important to maintain both economic activity and settlements in Svalbard," said Monica Mæland, head of the trade ministry, during a press conference Thursday in Oslo. "Mining by Store Norske is a contribution to this. At the same time, this is an industry with challenging market conditions and significant risks. This agreement paves the way for the operation of
See BAILOUT, page 4



REGJERINGEN.NO

Trade, Industries and Fisheries Minister Monica Mæland examines coal inside the Lunckefjell mine during a visit to Svalbard in 2014.

'Shocking' cuts at NPI



PIOTR KUKLINSKI / NORWEGIAN POLAR INSTITUTE

A researcher measures light under the sea ice as part of the Norwegian Polar Institute's six-month *Lance* expedition north of Svalbard, one of the agency's most visible and costly projects ever.

10% staff cut reportedly sought by Norwegian Polar Institute; director says Svalbard may gain

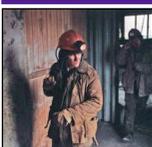
By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Employees and union leaders are expressing anger at reports the Norwegian Polar Institute is seeking a 10 percent reduction in staff, but the director said virtually all departures will be voluntary and the agency's activities in Svalbard and elsewhere should benefit from the effort to improve cost efficiencies.

News of the cutbacks caught many by surprise since the institute has been emphasizing its increased activities in the Arctic, including the current high-profile and high-budget expedition by *Lance* in the sea ice north of Svalbard. But Jan-Gunnar Winther, the institute's director, emphasized the reductions are not drastic and come at a time when many government agencies are being asked to trim costs.

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Soviet secrecy



Fire in mine concealed for decades

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Explosive discovery



First-ever magpie is the 'bomb'

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Environmental earmarks



Store Norske gets lion's share of grants

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Polar posturing



Russia in focus as U.S. heads Arctic Council
icepeople.net

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.

It all depends what the meaning of 'winning' is



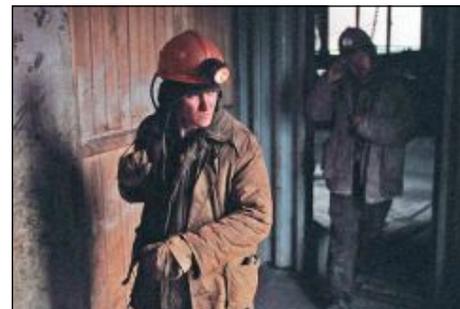
MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Caroline Landmark and Jorge Cuadrado Reyes pass the starting line of the 23rd annual Svalbard Skimaraton several minutes after a multitude of world-class racers and other competitors Saturday morning. The pair's late start, which had something to do with a "little trouble with the bus," ensured they avoided the crowds resulting from a record 900 participants during much of the 42-kilometer race through Todalen. Johan Kjølstad was the overall winner with a time of two hours, five minutes and 36.8 seconds, beating Øystein Pettersen's second-place finish in 2:07:16. Astrid Øyreslind was the women's winner with a time of 2:26:39. Participants described conditions as ideal, with temperatures slightly below freezing, clear skies, little or no wind, and stable snow.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

If people sense Russia isn't exactly buckling under the heat as other nations are becoming increasingly hostile due its Arctic aggressiveness, it's because they've got a remarkable history of concealing its woes and ambitions. We're not sure which of the following is more mind-boggling: that **a fire in the Pyramiden mine was still burning 18 months after it started, or that Russia kept it a secret from Norway for 30 years.** A report last Tuesday by TV2 reveals the fire started Feb. 12, 1972, and was still burning in August of 1973. "If these failures had been known to the Norwegian authorities, they could have been used to damage Soviet interests on Spitsbergen," KGB Chief Vasiliy Mitrok wrote in a letter that month to the Soviet Union's Central Committee, according to the TV station. The health and safety of the workers was reportedly overlooked as well, with operations continuing despite several explosions coal dust more than ten times the legal limit and 626 safety violations during the first five months of 1973. Nutrition from fresh food was also described as scant, with 200 grams of tomatoes and one lemon among the provisions in one person's yearly ration. Norway's Police Security Service finally learned about the fire in 2002 from their British counterparts in the Secret Intelligence Service ... Meanwhile, the old Soviet mentality is still thriving today as the quarreling continues about Russian Deputy



NTB SCANPIX

Fearing the KGB more than explosions? It takes a special kind of motivation to get folks to go to a worksite that's been on fire for 18 months.

Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozan's unwanted visit here earlier this month. While some media are playing up the incident when reporting the Norwegian government's support for a Store Norske bailout and others are focusing on Russia's insistence that "Norway has no right to stop anyone from visiting Svalbard," **we're intrigued by how the Russian state-owned media keeps dutifully reporting Rogozan "spent no more than an hour on Svalbard."** Since the reports also usually remind readers he was indulging in his Twitter habit during the visit, it takes a remarkable bit of doublethink to accept the claim since a message was sent from Barentsburg four hours and 53 minutes after his first tweet from Svalbard Airport.

Icepeople as you know it may be gone forever after this week – so please help!

Don't panic: the world's coolest newspaper will still be here delivering Svalbard's finest bathroom reading experience, but this may be the last skinny four-page newspaper we publish as we've finally gotten a few advertisers. While they have our undying thanks (and hopefully your support), they will only pay for part of the increased costs we'll incur as we expand to eight pages and possibly beyond. So if you appreciate the extra effort, take a moment to visit icepeople.net and help by purchasing a "subscription" of any amount.



PETER LEOPOLD / NORWEGIAN POLAR INSTITUTE

Researchers and crew participating in the *Lance* expedition salvage equipment around the research ship as the sea ice breaks up earlier this month. The project is scheduled to continue until summer.

NPI looking to trim costs, staff

SCIENTISTS, from page 1

"We expect to come out strengthened after this," he said. "We have had 10 years of growth behind us. A number of Norwegian governmental institutions are asked to be more efficient. We're looking for areas we can get more return for our money to make certain we are using our money in most efficient way possible."

Union representatives have stated the institute is seeking a 10 percent reduction of its 170 employees due to an expected lower allocation of funds in next year's national budget.

"Employers are within their rights to offer voluntary severance packages to employees without going into negotiations with the unions, but we have indicated that we disagree with the institute since the budget for 2016 is not to be submitted before the fall," said Arild Sundfjord, a representative for The Norwegian Association of Researchers, in an interview with the *iTromsø*.

But Winther said there is no fixed total of staff cuts. He said graphics design, affecting two employees, is being eliminated because less work is being performed in that area. In addition, an unspecified number of employees are being offered voluntary severance packages – but no additional layoffs are planned if few accept.

"If everyone says no there will not be a second round," Winther said.

Ivar Stokkeland, a representative for the Norwegian Civil Service Union, told *iTromsø* the severance plan is vague and is sending a negative message to employees.

"Our members are shocked, angry, frustrated and angry," he said. "Most people would say no to a severance payment, but the signal from the employer is still that we would like to see you stop. There is not a particularly good mood in the department at the moment. People have not been given a particularly good explanation for the selection of who is on the cut list."

Winther said the institute is also seeking to use more efficient logistics to lower the cost of research cruises and reduce other travel costs where appropriate.

"Of course there is frustration in the institute, but this is a very limited downscaling of employees," he said.

"It's a number of measures we would like to activate to make us more efficient and flexible for new task. It's not one single thing."

Svalbard is likely to benefit from the effort since it is an area of increasing importance for the institute and Norway, Winther said.

"There is a need in Svalbard to structure activities more broadly within several sectors, including research and education," he said.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Longyearbyen's population up, but fewer from Norway

Longyearbyen's population of 2,127 as of the end of 2014 is 161 more than at the end of 2006, but the number of Norwegians declined by 130 during that time. Kjerstin Askholt, director general of Norway's Ministry of Justice and Public Security's Polar Affairs Department, said she has long been aware of the trend and the issue is being addressed in a revised "white paper" outlining policy goals for Svalbard. But while maintaining a strong Norwegian presence in the archipelago is an important strategic goal, she and other officials declined to characterize the trend as negative since the Svalbard Treaty allows all signature nations to have equal access. Longyearbyen Mayor Christin Kristoffersen said projects such as a new long-term industry strategic plan and the proposal for expanding Longyearbyen's port are being done with an eye on developing a future community with a Norwegian foundation.

Expert: First magpie spotted in Svalbard is the 'bomb'

The first-ever sighting of a magpie in Svalbard, photographed last week on Bjørnøya, is the 213th bird species registered in the archipelago, according to the Norwegian Nature Inspectorate. "That's what ornithologists call a bomb," said Georg Bangjord, an ornithologist and senior adviser for the agency. "It is unclear how it has brought itself there. Magpies don't have the flying characteristics to survive such a trip physically. So I think there must have been very special conditions for it to have a clear passage across the ocean on its own wings. Another possibility is that the magpie was pulled out of the sea and simply been a stowaway on a boat."

Man falls off trawler, found dead in water east of Hopen

A man who fell off a Lithuanian trawler Sunday morning east of Hopen was dead when his shipmates found him, according to The Governor of Svalbard. The *Plutonas* requested assistance for a search after discovering the man was missing at about 8 a.m., but notified the governor shortly after he'd been located.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Partly cloudy. SW winds to 18 km/h. High -7C (-10C wind chill), low -7C (-11C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. W winds to 18 km/h. High -6C (-10C wind chill), low -8C (-12C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. NW winds to 29 km/h. High -5C (-11C wind chill), low -8C (-13C wind chill).	Cloudy. NW winds to 29 km/h. High -3C (-8C wind chill), low -6C (-11C wind chill).
24-hour daylight	24-hour daylight	24-hour daylight	24-hour daylight

Extended forecast: Sunday, p. cloudy, -3C (-6C), -6C (-10C), light 24:00h; Monday, clear, -5C (-8C), -7C (-11C), light 24:00h; Tuesday, clear, -3C (-6C), -7C (-11C), light 24:00h; Wednesday, p. cloudy, -2C (-6C), -4C (-8C), light 24:00h

Data provided by storm.no



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Busloads of tourists enter Mine 3 for a concert during the fall of 2013. Store Norske plans to turn the closed mine into a museum in time for the company's 100th anniversary next year.

A motherload for mine museum

2.5M environmental grant to Store Norske dominates 7.3M awarded to 32 Svalbard projects

By MARK SABBATINI

Editor

The environment may not be good at Store Norske right now – and many argue the struggling coal company isn't good for the environment – but it is the dominant winner in the latest round of grants aimed at protecting Svalbard's nature and cultural heritage.

A 2.5-million-kroner grant to help the

company turn the closed Mine 3 into a museum accounts for more than a third of the 7.3 million kroner awarded to 32 projects by the Svalbard Environmental Protection Fund last week.

The company was also the single-largest grant recipient last fall, getting 835,000 kroner for the museum and another tourism project.

The full list of this spring's grant recipient is available at tinyurl.com/nrwlk2h. The next grant application deadline is Sept. 15.

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

Protection, not profits, spur aid?

BAILOUT, from page 1

the mining company to continue, but there is no guarantee that market conditions ahead are good enough to provide a basis for further coal mining in the long term."

The bailout must still be approved by Parliament, although statements supporting Store Norske by leaders of several political parties suggest a solid majority in favor exists.

Store Norske, after losing a record 537 million kroner in 2014, submitted a request in January for a 450-million-kroner, 50 million kroner of which was intended for a new subsidiary focusing on other industries such as logistics and infrastructure. Annette Malm Justad, chairwoman of Store Norske's board of directors, stated in an e-mail interview the government's bailout does not include funding for the proposed subsidiary.

"This solution will ensure coal mining can be carried out through 2016," she wrote. "Continuing operations beyond this depends on three factors: Coal prices have to come up to a

somewhat higher level, Store Norske must be able to reduce its costs further and the company must succeed in extracting added value by selling coal to new areas of utilization."

But while the company is focusing on how to continue mining despite what may be a long-term drop in coal prices, government officials and observers are evaluating the company's role in maintaining Norway's presence in Svalbard, which is facing challenges from Russia and other countries.

"Such a subsidiary loan is totally contrary to what is the business policy the conservatives otherwise stands for," an editorial in *Dagbladet* noted. "But here we are talking about something more and something bigger. Norway must assert its sovereignty over the archipelago and the Svalbard Treaty is not sufficient. A comprehensive and visible presence is needed, and Store Norske is still an essential part of the Svalbard community."

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

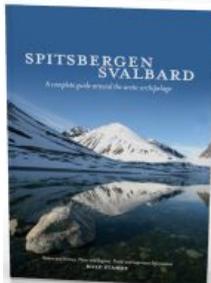
"This book does not only cover **comprehensive** information concerning all fields of possible interest, but is at the same time a photo book containing many color images to illustrate many wildlife and flower species and to document landscapes and places from all over the archipelago."

- Reader review

THE complete guidebook by the complete guide



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What's up

April 29

8 p.m.: Spring jazz concert by the Longyearbyen Big Band. Coalminers Cabin in Nybyen..

May 1

5 p.m.: May Day Mass w/ music by the Longyearbyen Mixed Choir. Svalbard Church.

May 3

11 a.m.: Mass. Svalbard Church.

5 p.m.: Movie: "Get Hard," U.S. comedy, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

7 p.m.: Movie: "Skammerens Datter," Danish action/adventure, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

May 4

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

May 5

7 p.m.: Longyearbyen Community Council meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

7 p.m.: Longyearbyen Kultureskole 20th anniversary concert. Svalbard Church.

May 6

6 p.m.: Movie: "Skammerens Datter," Danish action/adventure, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

May 7

6 p.m.: Concert by Longyearbyen Kultureskole students. Kulturhuset.

7:30 p.m.: Concert by Siri Nilsen. Kulturhuset.

May 10

11 a.m.: Mass. Svalbard Church.

5 p.m.: Movie: "Get Hard," U.S. comedy, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

7 p.m.: "Stamen," Dutch/Ukrainian drama/romance, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

May 11

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

May 12

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

- *Stocks fuel oil wealth fund's record year*
- *Norway's finance minister: climate skeptic*
- *Claim: Shell lies about Arctic oil risks*
- *Water in Antarctica a sign of life on Mars?*