



More ship accidents in store?

Two arrested after grounded vessel spills oil; risk likely to rise as warming opens waters

There's a bounty of riches awaiting in the melting waters of the Arctic, but native dwellers may pay the ultimate price as increased traffic means a greater risk of incidents like a Russian ship that ran aground and spilled oil in a Svalbard bird sanctuary last week.

The *Petrozavodsk* remains stuck on the

southern coast of Bear Island, with the captain facing prosecution for drinking on duty and the first mate for drinking and falling asleep while on watch. With Arctic seas containing up to a quarter of the world's remaining oil and cargo shippers preparing to take advantage of much cheaper polar routes, officials say current regulations and resources are insufficient and could have catastrophic impacts.

"We must be realistic and expect that more such modern 'landmarks' can emerge and

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The *Petrozavodsk* after running aground on Bear Island last week. Photo provided by the Norwegian Coastal Administration.

Sweets, salutes and song

Victory before a global crowd gives Norwegians extra reason for pride on Constitution Day

Important as honoring soldiers and children on the national holiday may be, the highlight for some Norwegians this year was a young violinist's "Fairytale."

Alexander Rybak, 23, smashed the record for the most points ever to win the 54th annual Eurovision Song Contest on Saturday night before more than 100 million television viewers worldwide, including nearly half of Norway's 4.8 million people. So Longyearbyen residents were singing his winning song



Dignitaries lead a human train of hundreds of people through the streets of Longyearbyen during the traditional *tog* parade as part of Norwegian Constitution Day on Sunday.

the next morning while parading through the streets in a traditional human train as part of Norwegian Constitution Day.

"The highlight?" said one man when asked about the best part of the holiday. "That

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Mush a rush despite brush with slush



Harvey Goodwin guides the first dog team along the Trappers' Trail race course May 9.

Svalbard's first sled dog race has a few ruff spots, but has participants begging to return

Sled dog racing started in Svalbard not with a bang or much ballyhoo, but plenty of barks.

There was no group countdown, bullhorn or much else leading up to the moment when Harvey Goodwin spurred his two dogs through the starting gate of the Trappers' Trail race at about 11 a.m. May 9 at The University Centre

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Editor

Mark Sabbatini

Copy editor

Kristan Hutchison

Psychiatrist

Irene Gallion

Mailing address

Icepeople
Vei 210 -2- 13
Longyearbyen, Svalbard
9170
Norway

Telephone

Norway: +47 41 51 46 38
U.S. +1 (970) 344-4559

E-mail

icepeople@yahoo.com

Web site

www.icepeople.net

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The Russian ship *Petrozavodsk* may be stuck on the coast of Bear Island, which officials say is a concern because of oil still inside. Photo provided by the Norwegian Coastal Administration

Arctic 'patchwork quilt' needs mending

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persist," said Svalbard Governor Per Sefland in a Norwegian Constitution Day speech to Longyearbyen residents during an evening theater event. The grounding is a reminder "of how fragile our exotic island is (and) a reminder that we must take new measures aimed at prevention."

The most heated modern-day battle is sovereignty rights as a multitude of nations fight for the right to an estimated 90 billion barrels of untapped oil, enough to meet current world demand for three years. There are also areas where mining companies may find new deposits. Increases in other commercial shipping activity is expected to increase, but experts say it may be decades before melting has advanced far enough to ensure waters are consistently safe and accessible for large-scale transit.

"The Arctic Ocean is a 'patchwork quilt' of tolls and regulations by several coastal nations," said Mead Treadwell, testifying for the U.S. Arctic Research Commission during a U.S. Senate hearing in June 2008. "Arctic shipping will grow when rules are certain and when products can be delivered competitively with other routes. This means on a time and cost basis, not just on shorter distances."

The *Petrozavodsk* is the first ship to run aground in Svalbard since about 1990, when another incident occurred on the west coast of Bear island, said Lars Fause, assistant governor for the archipelago. He said the north coast of the island has a ship identification system, but its 50-kilometer range was insufficient to detect when the Russian vessel veered off course, one of many deficiencies regional officials are now trying to correct.

"Our suggestion is to put an antenna on the southern part of the island," he said. Other areas needing detectors to deal with future ship traffic include west coast areas such as Ny-Ålesund and the northeast channel.

Even if an incident is detected, responding can be problematic due to weather, geography



and available equipment, Fause said. It took 20 hours for the Coast Guard to reach the *Petrozavodsk* and fog soon after kept a group of environmental professionals from inspecting the scene.

"If there is a crash with oil pollution in the east of Svalbard we have no resources to send out quickly," he said, adding "in other part of the islands we may not be able to handle the situation for many days."

Some of that is being addressed with increased training, requests for equipment and policy strategies emphasizing environmental protection as expanded economic opportunities are considered, Fause said.

But improving access doesn't necessarily mean resolving problems, as the *Petrozavodsk* may demonstrate.

"They told us it may not be possible to rescue the vessel," Fause said. Salvagers need to build a small dock behind the ship, which the geography may not permit, and "they told us the weather conditions are very tough out there."

The ship was carrying a total of 30 cubic meters of oil divided into four containers, at least two of which may have broken.

"They think the next storm the ship may be taken out and there may be more pollution," Fause said. The good news is "it is diesel, not heavy oil, so it is disappearing."

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



Tommy Jordbrudal mashes the only Greenlandic "fan hitch" team of dogs through the starting gate of the Trappers' Trail race May 9 at The University Centre in Svalbard. The two-day event was the first known sled dog race in Svalbard and the northernmost race in the world.

Mushers keep things fun and loose

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In Svalbard. A modest cheer rose from the crowd, mostly other racers and support staff, as his dogs almost immediately did a haw of their own making and veered outside the course markers.

Goodwin set things right within a few hundred meters and vanished from sight shortly after as he began the journey to Bikkjebu. It's not like it was a race where anyone would blink at a few unscripted moments – just the fact he was in the race was testament to that.

He and teammate Marzena Kaczmarek entered after the "official" deadline and in their own category outside the "official" rules. There was a category for a lone skier to guide one to three dogs on the first part of the two-day course, but team "Tractor" decided to do the whole thing.

"We both wanted to race," Kaczmarek explained.

Keeping things loose meant keeping things fun-spirited, as the winner wasn't going to get much reward beyond a lower bar bill at the post-race party. A couple of the 11 teams had racing experience, but most were just dog

lovers interested in the experience.

The most important thing to bring on the trail, according to Team Tractor?

"GPS," Kaczmarek said.

"Dog treats," Goodwin countered.

The race, organized by the Longyearbyen Hundeklubb, consisted of a 40-kilometer mush to the overnight checkpoint at Bikkjebu and a 30-kilometer return journey across a more challenging route. Janne Søreide, who took the first large team of dogs (seven or more) out of the starting gate five minutes after Goodwin, was also the overall winner with a total time of 4 hours 30 minutes. Linn Novis and Emilie Guegan won the small team category (four to six dogs) with a time of 5:35:26. Kaczmarek and Goodwin, the only team on skis, completed the course in 7:39:32, ahead of two teams with sleds.

Another unique team of eight dogs was led by Tommy Jordbrudal, using the only Greenlandic "fan hitch" where each dog has an individual tether. He also got off to a wayward start just past the gate, but did fine from there with a second-overall finish at 4:57:44.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Major changes coming to Lompensenteret center

A larger convenience store and an uncertain future for the Busen cafe are part of a large-scale renovation underway at Lompensenteret. The center section of the complex housing Busen's kitchen facilities are being revamped and new businesses sought to occupy the space. One confirmed change is Mix Isbjørnbutikken will double its space by moving from its current location in an adjacent building. Busen owners declined to comment on their future, but have a contract in the center until the end of the year.

Polar bear shot by researchers at Kinnvika

An international research team reported May 10 they shot a young male polar bear near a building at Kinnvika on Nordaustlandet. The Svalbard governor's office said they will investigate the incident.

Students observe VE Day

Eighth and ninth-grade students from Longyearbyen School gathered May 8 at the Skjæringa monument to commemorate the 64th anniversary of the liberation of Norway during World War II. Svalbard inhabitants during the war were evacuated to England and coal resources set on fire so the Germans could not use them.

Elimination of SAS night flights delays mail, papers

Scandinavian Airlines has eliminated its two night flights between Tromsø and Longyearbyen for May, with officials saying they are economically unsustainable. The cut means mail and newspapers will be delayed until the afternoon flight. Night service is scheduled to resume when cruise ship season begins in June.

More at www.svalbardposten.no

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday

Cloudy, a few flurries. WSW winds at 11 km/h. High 1C (0C wind chill), low -4C (-4C wind chill).

Thursday

Sunny and patchy clouds. WSW winds at 4 km/h. High -1C (-1C wind chill), low -3C (-3C wind chill).

Friday

Sun and clouds. Light winds. High 0C (0C wind chill), low -6C (-7C wind chill).

Saturday

Colder with snow, NE winds at 9 km/h. High -5C (-6C wind chill), low -8C (-8C wind chill).

Extended forecast: Sunday, sun and low clouds, -3C (-3C), -7C (-7C); Monday, partly sunny -3C (-3C), -5C (-13C); Tuesday, snow, -3C (-13C), -6C (-12C); Wednesday, cloudy and flurries, -3C (-3C), -4C (-13C).

Data provided by AccuWeather.com



Marianne Bø and Ida Sigernes, at left, perform a "Sirkus Svalnardo" act as part of an evening variety show at Huset during Norwegian Constitution Day on Sunday. Youths, top right, try to carry a potato on a spoon while navigating an obstacle course at Svalbardhallen. Bjørn Arnestad, lower right, lays a wreath paying tribute to fallen soldiers at the Skjæringa memorial.

Rituals have different feel for some

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happened last night."

The victory means a yet-to-be determined Norwegian city will host the contest about this time next year. The early betting odds don't favor Longyearbyen, which at 1,000-1 is tied for last with Rybaks' hometown of Nesodden. However, Tromsø's 5-1 odds does give Arctic Norway one of the strongest contenders.

Longyearbyen's presented its own cultural awards – including a prestigious "all things bad" statuette to a person making things less bad – during an evening variety show as part of the town's Constitution Day events. Other activities included memorial tributes, and an afternoon of children indulging in games, sweets and stage performances.

Norway's national holiday emphasizes kids, in contrast to many countries that place the dominant focus on the military. Henrik Wergeland, a 19th century poet, is credited for placing the focus on youths being the country's future and source of patriotic pride.

Tove Seljevold, who moved to Longyearbyen a few months ago and performed a solo folk song at evening show, said she generally hasn't participated in many festivities on the mainland since her son grew up. But in Svalbard, where most residents are short-term and often away from loved ones, familiar rituals take on a somewhat different character.

"Here it feels like it's more important to share the day with others," she said.

Those staying up late to celebrate after the Eurovision contest may have been on short sleep rations when the Constitution Day activities began at 7 a.m. with the traditional firing of a salute. The laying of a memorial wreath at Huset, closing of the flowers at the mining monument in the town square and a holiday liturgy at Svalbard Church followed

before most of the town gathered at a memorial outside the church.

"Now we do ice cream," one woman explained to a couple of church visitors as they walked outside.

"Where?" one of them asked.

"Everywhere," she replied.

Everyone got a little exercise first during the *tog* parade through the streets, with political and military leaders pacing the marching band and students in each grade carrying decorated banners – along with most other locals marching rather than watching. The procession ended at the Skjæringa memorial, where a wreath and flowers were laid by Bjørn Arnestad, director of the coal company Store Norske, and Vjatseslav Nikolajev, the Russian general consul in Barentsburg.

While the memorial pays tribute to fallen soldiers, Arnestad talked about a recent visit by Gunnar Sønsteby, Norway's most decorated living veteran, and the importance of his lessons since World War II is "distant and unreal" for most people today.

"In a time when wealth, beauty and success are often represented as the most important thing in life, it is perhaps even more important to listen to people like Gunnar Sønsteby when he talks about values as equality, community and tolerance, and that our freedom is hard won and valuable," Arnestad said.

Another procession by bus, car and on foot brought revelers to the children's activities at Svalbardhallen. There wasn't much ice cream to start, but kids had ample opportunity to get wired on numerous cakes and soda accompanying the hot dogs and *smørbrød*.

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

What's up

May 23

6:30 p.m.: Cultural show in Barentsburg, featuring various artists and performers from Longyearbyen.

May 24

6 p.m.: Movie, "ORPS – The Movie," Norwegian comedy, all ages. Huset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "The Reader," U.S. drama/romance. Ages 15 and up. Huset.

May 25

10:15 a.m.: Environment and industry committee meeting, Næringsbygget 3.

May 30

7:30 p.m.: Vårsleppen 2009, cultural festival featuring local and mainland performers. UNIS cafeteria. 400 NOK, including cold buffet and drinks. National or proper attire.

June 1

8 p.m.: Movie "Spurvenes Sang," Iranian drama, ages 7 and up. Huset.

June 2

Waste plant closed until June 4 for service, cleaning and assembly work. No deliveries of waste accepted.

10 a.m.: Meeting of the Administrative Committee, Næringsbygget 1.

June 6

10 a.m.: Spitsbergen Marathon. Full, half and 10K races starting at Svalbardhallen. Registration and payment due by June 1.

Noon: Storytelling and balloons. Longyearbyen author Sigri Sandberg Meløy reads from his new book "Ballongmamma" ("Balloon Mamma") and hands out balloons. Longyearbyen library.

7 p.m.: Culture from Barentsburg, traditional events featuring participants from Russian settlement. Huset. Tickets 100 NOK adults, 50 NOK students/seniors/children.

June 7

6 p.m.: Movie: "Disco-ormene," German animated children's film. Huset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Slumdog Millionaire," comedy/drama winner of eight Oscar awards including best film, ages 11 and up. Huset.