



The Norwegian AISSat-1, launched Monday and depicted here in orbit, will improve marine safety in the High North by tracking vessels weighing more than 300 tons. The cube is 20 centimeters long on each side and weighs six kilograms. Image courtesy of the Norwegian Space Centre.

A closer view from afar

New satellite improves safety in northern seas by tracking ships

It's a cube whose main component is smaller and weighs less than a microwave oven, but it now has the huge responsibility of helping track all of the larger ships in Norway's northern seas.

The experimental AISSat-1 satellite was successfully launched into orbit from India on Monday. The satellite, measuring 20 centimeters long on each side and weighing six kilograms, will track all vessels weighing more than 300 tons. The ships are now required to have AIS capability in order to communicate with other vessels and coastline base stations.

"The use of this technology in a fully de-

veloped system will improve safety at sea for ocean-going vessels in the north and around Svalbard," said Arve Dimmen, maritime safety director for the Norwegian Coastal Administration. "It will make it easier to identify and coordinate vessels on search-and-rescue operations, and will also be used towards the monitoring of transport of dangerous goods and environmental incidents."

The 35-million-kroner AISSat-1 was one of five payloads aboard an Indian Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle at the Sriharikota Spaceport in Andhra Pradesh. The satellite reached

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Probe of Store Norske sought

Troms-Finnmark prosecutors recommend Norwegian officials investigate company's contracts

A criminal investigation by Norwegian officials into contracts by Store Norske that audits claim are highly questionable is being sought by regional prosecutors.

The recommendation comes in a letter this week from Troms-Finnmark District Attorney Ole Sæverud after Store Norske asked for a review of the contracts by Robert Hermansen, the company's administrative director from 1999 to 2008. The audits state the agreements are paying far above market value, costing Store Norske hundreds of millions of kroner, and Hermansen also accepted questionable loans to benefit other businesses he managed.

"We have received the review Store Norske submitted, read through the material and decided that we want to send this to the Norwegian authorities with a request that they initiate an investigation," Sæverud said in an interview with TV 2, which first reported the audits' findings in June.

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Seed vault deposit means more heat

Salsa after doomsday, yes – but with a 24,300-lb. carbon footprint

Red hot chili peppers....Arctic doomsday seed vault. Anyone could see the spicy headlines coming long before the world heard and read them.

A post-Armageddon feast of salsa and melons while reminiscing about the days of "Blood Sugar Sex Magik" is yet another story about the Svalbard Global Seed Vault equally likely to be seen in news of the world or News Of The Weird. Also, as usual, there's plenty of heat about whether the latest deposit Sunday is helping save the world or contribute to its destruction.

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These chilies cultivated by Native Americans are among the seed species deposited Sunday in the Svalbard Global Seed Vault. Photo courtesy of the Global Crop Diversity Trust.

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.

A costly voyage



The captain of the passenger ship *Polar Star*, above, has been fined 15,000 kroner by the Svalbard governor's office for violating the Ship Safety Act after grounding June 30 near Hornsund. The governor's office, in a statement, said the ship did not have current charts for the area on board. No injuries resulted from the incident, but the ship was damaged and took on water. Photo by Per Andreassen of the governor's office.

Store Norske case goes national

INVESTIGATION, from page 1

Hermansen has denied wrongdoing and his attorney claims company officials, who were aware of and approved the contracts' terms, are trying to negotiate more favorable agreements by making the former director look bad.

Store Norske ordered its audit after the agreements were questioned in a separate review by Norwegian Ministry of Trade and Industry that was withheld from the public for more than a year. The mining company has stated it intends to renegotiate or cancel the contracts.

Among the allegations are subcontractors receiving excessively lucrative service contracts for unusually long durations. Hermansen also arranged 3 million kroner in funding from one of those subcontractors, Leonard Nilsen and Sons (LNS), to help two of his other businesses. In addition, the former director ar-

ranged a 100 million kroner loan with a German subcontractor in his private attempt to buy half of the state-owned Store Norske in 2004.

Hermansen resigned from all positions in public companies in June.

Store Norske officials asked the Svalbard governor's office to investigate the possibility of criminal charges. The governor's office passed the matter to regional officials, who are asking for the national review due to the expected complexity of the case.

"The governor of Svalbard believed that they could not investigate the matter further," Sæverud said in an interview with NRK. "We could of course have left it to one of the police districts on the mainland, but as the matter is, I find it appropriate to ask the Norwegian authorities to take over the research."

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

Briefly

Donation brings 3D films to new cultural center

Longyearbyen's new cultural center will feature 3D movie capability after receiving a 160,000-kroner contribution from a local company discontinuing its business.

Svalbard TV, which had a license for commercials shown in Longyearbyen from 1990 to 1998, made the donation when its remaining board of directors decided it was "a good way to use the balance of the capital," according to Roger Ødegård, the city's cultural advisor. The equipment will cost a total of 220,000 kroner.

The new center will also feature digital equipment, allowing expanded options such as interactive games, transmission of sports events, opera performances and movie marathons.

Also, LNS Spitsbergen announced they are

donating 100,000 kroner for artistic decorations, with the center expecting to spend up to 700,000 on such costs.

The new center is scheduled to open Dec. 2, with officials hoping to show a world premier 3D movie on Dec. 3.

Mission to Mars involves a boat trip to Ny-Ålesund

When these folks say Svalbard is like another planet, it's more than just hype.

The Arctic Mars Analog Svalbard Expedition is scheduled to depart this week for Ny-Ålesund, where researchers will study the area's Mars-like carbonate deposits and test biosensor technology being developed for future missions to the red planet.

Details about their research are available at <https://amase.gl.ciw.edu>.



An integration team inspects the AISSat-1 satellite while loading it onto a rocket before Monday's launch in India. Photo courtesy of the Norwegian Space Centre.

Tracking Arctic ships not always easy

SATELLITE, from page 1

its 600-kilometer-high polar orbit 20 minutes after launch, according to the Norwegian Space Centre.

AISSat-1 is designed to supplement a chain of 39 land-based monitoring stations operated by the Norwegian Coastal Administration along Norway's coast.

"We want to manage these resources in the best possible manner and we do that now with radar satellites that give us quite a good overview about where ships are," said Bo Andersen, NSC's director general, in an interview with the BBC. "But they don't give us knowledge about which ships they are."

"Of course, the fisheries authorities and the coast guard can go out in airplanes and check the ships, but we are talking about an area that's bigger than the Mediterranean. So we want a more efficient system."

There are a few drawbacks to AISSat-1, Andersen noted in a separate interview with *The Foreigner*. AIS receives signals depending on their strength and the position of the antenna on the ship, meaning the receiver gets saturated in areas with heavy traffic.

But the High North doesn't have such regions, so "this is not a problem for areas for which the mission is designed – the Barents Sea and Svalbard," Andersen said.

More close-ups of afar

A third antenna at Svalbard's EISCAT is in the early planning stages, with China tentatively agreeing to fund the 50-meter dish.

The goal of three antennas has existed since the facility's design in the 1990s, and China must make the contribution to gain full access to EISCAT data and installations, said Arvid Øvergård, project manager for the new antenna, in an interview with *Svalbardposten*. He said the new antenna will be active in 2013 at the earliest.

In addition to the experiments and studies directed towards the sun and atmosphere existing antennas allow, the new antenna is intended for China's ongoing moon-landing program, the newspaper reported.

However, AISSat-1 has problems receiving signals from vessels in deep fjords with mountains, which is why its role is supplementary.

The satellite is part of a project that may eventually lead to a space-based AIS system for Europe. But Andersen said AISSat-1 data, which contains information relevant to national security, will be tightly protected by Norwegian officials.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM

SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Svalbard Church starts keeping count of visitors

Nearly 400 tourists dropped by Svalbard Church when the cruise ship *Costa Magica* visited at the beginning of July. Torunn Sørensen, the church's household manager, said this is the first time they have tracked tourist visits and the numbers are revealing about the level of interest. "Very many people have questions about what kind of church this is, since they see both the Catholic and Orthodox elements," she said. "We explain that we are a church for the whole of Svalbard." She said a surprising number also light a candle for the church's globe.

Five-song EP by two local youths to be released soon

Final touches are being put on the five-song EP "Snøstjerna," recorded by Simen Henriksen and Inger-Johanne Mørk, with local sales and a release party planned upon completion. The four songs in Norwegian and one English are originals co-written by the Longyearbyen youths (except for "Magic Wand," written solely by Henriksen), and recording started in March after extensive work together. They said they wrote additional songs, but selected the best because a full-length album would have been too much work. The songs were recorded at Huset, with final processing and printing now taking place in Oslo. Others credited on the album include pianist/singer Liv Mari Schei, bassist/guitarist Nick Weis-Fogh, drummer Glenn Karlsen and soundman Kyrre Fledsberg.

CinemArctic festival delayed for a year due to lack of time

The planned CinemArctic festival will not be held this year due to lack of preparation time, according to organizers. The festival was scheduled Sept. 8-12 and had a full guest list, but "it was too short a time to make it as good as we wanted," said Christin Kristoffersen, the event's chairperson. She said most guests have said they will attend next year on dates in September to be determined. Organizers are now seeing if they can use 895,000 kroner pledged from sponsors next year.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday

Sunny with late clouds. WSW winds at 2 km/h. High 8C (6C wind chill), low 6C (6C wind chill).

Thursday

Partly cloudy. W winds at 3 km/h. High 6C (6C wind chill), low 4C (4C wind chill).

Friday

Cloudy. SW winds at 4 km/h. High 6C (5C wind chill), low 5C (5C wind chill).

Saturday

Rain, then cloudy. SW winds at 4 km/h. High 2C (2C wind chill), low 2C (2C wind chill).

Extended forecast: Sunday, cloudy with a shower, 2C (2C), 2C (2C); Monday, cloudy, 2C (2C), 1C (1C); Tuesday, cloudy with periods or sleet and rain, 2C (2C), 1C (1C); Wednesday, sleet, then cloudy, 1C (1C), 1C (1C).

Data provided by yr.no



Congressional members from the United States present a box of hot chili seeds and other species Sunday to Cary Fowler (center, gray jacket) at the Svalbard Global Seed Vault. Photo courtesy of the U.S. Commission on Cooperation and Security in Europe.

Spicy seeds, cold vault are hot news

PEPPERS, from page 1

"A new collection of some of North America's hottest foods" were deposited in the vault by a seven-person congressional delegation from the United States, according to a statement by the group. The 537 varieties of 13 crops includes Wenk's Yellow Hots, a pepper that starts out yellow and hot and cools somewhat to red and medium-hot; Pico de Gallo or "Rooster's beak," a medium-hot salsa staple; and the unpredictable San Juan "Tsile," a New Mexico chili still grown by elder farmers in a Native American pueblo that can be anything from mild to medium to hot.

Also in the collection are melons, peanuts, beans, sesame, hibiscus, squash, gourd and 448 varieties of sorghum.

"The world is interdependent when it comes to crop diversity, the essential raw material needed for a healthy and robust food supply," said Sen. Benjamin Cardin, a Maryland Democrat, in a widely quoted press release. "As we manage the impact of climate change and other natural and man-made disasters around the world, the seed vault in Svalbard will be the safety deposit box that ensures we can keep that food supply intact."

Lawmakers from both major political parties were in the delegation, but to skeptics the group was just more liberal tree-hugging hypocrites on a taxpayer-funded vacation to promote the nonexistent threat of climate change.

"According to carbon management organization TerraPass.com, the seven-member delegation generated more than 24,300 pounds of carbon just by flying round-trip from Washington, D.C., to Oslo, Norway," wrote Kyle Gillis in Business & Media Institute. "That doesn't account for other travel associated with the trip. According to Climate Crisis, a website affiliated with Al Gore's 'An Inconvenient Truth,' the average person generates 15,000 pounds of carbon dioxide a year. Cardin's delegation generated about 1.5 times as much carbon dioxide just in traveling as the average person generates in an entire year."

"Despite other climate-conscious liberals

hypocritically leaving giant carbon footprints, the media continue to treat it as water under the bridge, which in this case, isn't as good as the hit Red Hot Chili Peppers song."

The vault has been open more than two years, with more than 100 worldwide entities depositing 525,000 varieties of seeds, making it Earth's largest gene bank. But a sense of the surreal remains in much of the coverage about it, supplemented by films, books and other popular culture playing up the "doomsday" nickname that makes scientists working with the facility cringe.

"Doomsday' Seed Vault Gets Spicy Contribution" by CBS News was a fairly typical "straight" headline. "Wacky" was the shorter description by the *Global Post*. There were also plenty of music references, such as a *Washington Post* piece headlined "What do Sen. Cardin, Norway and the Red Hot Chili Peppers have in common?" that goes on to note "Cardin did not mention what kind of music the members listened to on their flight."

But most of the coverage also managed to work some of more serious science details in, especially in locations contributing some of the crops. The sorghum was among the most commonly mentioned, since the delegation emphasized it's a "climate change ready" crop grown worldwide and is a dietary staple for 500 million people in more than 30 countries.

"Sorghum is an amazingly versatile crop—it's used for flour, bread, animal feed, beer and, increasingly, biofuels—and it's likely to become ever more important to global food security given its drought tolerance," said Cary Fowler, executive director of the Global Crop Diversity Trust, which funds the operation and management of the seed vault.

"But production in many areas is threatened by insect pest and plant disease. This intensifies the need to conserve sorghum diversity so that plant breeders can find the genetic traits they need to equip this important crop for these challenges."

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

What's up

July 18

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Prince of Persia," U.S. action/fantasy, ages 11 and up. Huset.

July 25

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Sex and the City 2," U.S. comedy, ages 11 and up. Huset.

Aug. 1

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "The A Team," U.S. action/adventure, ages 15 and up. Huset.

Aug. 8

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Cash," Swedish action/drama, ages 15 and up. Huset.

Aug. 14

Svalbard's National Day celebration.

Details to be published at www.svalbardkirke.no.

Aug. 15

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "The Twilight Saga - Eclipse," U.S. fantasy/romance/thriller, ages 11 and up. Huset.

Aug. 22

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

6 p.m.: Movie: "Operasjon Froskeegg," Norwegian family film, all ages. Huset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "She's Out Of My League," U.S. comedy/romance, all ages. Huset.

Aug. 29

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

Sept. 1

6 p.m.: Activity fair featuring local recreation clubs. Svalbardhallen.

Sept. 5

6 p.m.: Movie: "Shrek – Happily Ever After," U.S. animated film with Norwegian subtitles, no age limit. Huset.

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:

- *Svalbard seeking better helicopters*
- *The church and Arctic climate change*
- *Russia, Norway race around North Pole*
- *Caribou shortage at northern eateries*