



## Top 10 stories of 2010

A dead polar bear, top right, lies on a northern Nordaustlandet beach July 29 after being shot for attacking kayaker Sebastian Plur Nilssen. Robert Hermansen, bottom left, discusses accusations of impropriety as the former administrative director of Store Norske in a mid-July TV interview. A food grinder supposed to be installed in all Longyearbyen homes, bottom right, is among the hundreds returned as defective.



ARLID LYSSAND / SVALBARD GOVERNOR'S OFFICE



TV2



BYDRIFT KF

# Bad bosses, bears

Store Norske corruption, attack on kayaker in tent most notable

By MARK SABBATINI  
Editor

The world's hottest year on record was also the year of businessmen, bears and basins behaving badly.

A scandal shaking the financial and execu-

tive foundations of Svalbard's largest employer to their core dominated headlines the second half of 2010. The world fixated on a different type of sensational misbehavior as polar bears displayed their ferocity against humans and

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# Elections, explorers big in 2011

By MARK SABBATINI  
Editor

Landmark anniversaries for a duo of polar exploring pioneers may allow Svalbard to rebound from a couple of recession-plagued years. If not, Longyearbyen residents can always unleash their wrath on local politicians.

Plenty of 2010's major stories, such as Store Norske's corruption scandal and the ongoing plight of polar bears due to climate change, will continue to be among the top headlines of 2011. But upcoming events such as local elections and honoring Norwegian pioneers will make major impacts as well, and in some cases succeed or fail in resolving some of last year's most pressing issues.

Tour companies worldwide started gearing up the hype months ago for Arctic expeditions during what the Norwegian government has declared the Year of Nansen-Amundsen. The honor recognizes the 150th anniversary of the birth of Fridtjof Nansen, a scientist and humanitarian who won international fame for reaching a record northern latitude of 86°13' during his North Pole expedition of 1893-96, and Roald Amundsen on the centennial of his historic first trek to the South Pole.

The commemoration starts Jan. 23 with a ceremony in Tromsø, but gains local

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# Where lawful meets lawlessness

Low crime, tricky legal issues highlights for departing Lt. governor

By MARK SABBATINI  
Editor

It's great helping govern a place with almost no crime, even if one of the biggest problems is even top officials often don't follow the law.

That might sound like George Orwell's principle of doublethink, but it defines one of the world's most unique legal landscapes for Lars Fause, who stepped down as Svalbard's lieutenant governor shortly before New Year's Day.

There's remarkable few crimes such as robberies and assaults. But dealing with the legal intricacies of issues with wider significance,

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MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Lars Fause looks at his remaining cases on his last full day as Svalbard's lieutenant governor.

## 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.

## No, I don't want to be in pictures



BBC

A polar bear attacks a BBC documentary camera worth 1.2 million kroner being used to help film "Polar Bear: Spy on the Ice," which aired in Britain during the past week. BBC employees tried to outwit the bears by concealing weather-resistant high-tech cameras, designed to survive in temperatures as low as minus 40 degree Celsius, inside casings resembling ice floes and other snow formations. But the bear wasn't fooled in this instance, briefly pawing the equipment before shredding it to pieces. Other cameras recorded the destruction and the ruined unit itself captured was described as "incredible close-up footage" of its own demise.

# Store Norske strikes gold

By MARK SABBATINI

Staff writer

Striking gold doesn't necessarily mean striking it rich.

Store Norske has found gold in St. Johns-fjorden after drilling 20 holes in the area midway between Longyearbyen and Ny-Ålesund, but it is unknown if there is enough to make mining it profitable, company officials said.

"The chances are certainly present, but how large it is, we cannot yet say," said Morten Often, general manager of Store Norske Gull in Svalbard, in an interview with NRK. "The results are so positive that we want to continue

the investigations in the summer."

The project cost several million kroner, with three tons of sample material analyzed in Canada and Sewden in recent months.

Store Norske Gull was founded in 2003 as a subsidiary of Store Norske, which is facing a long-term decline in coal mining and looking to profit from other resources.

TV2 reported this week the company could be facing an end to coal mining in Svalbard as early as 2016 unless a new mine in Lunckefjell is opened.

**There's more! Visit [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net) for the complete story.**

## Icesheet

*Random bits of the week's weirdness:*

Alas, it appears Svalbard's "Predator X" may no longer be the world's fiercest creature to ever swim the seas. Scientists examining the skull of a 150-million-year-old pliosaur found on Britain's Dorset coast believe it may have been 60 feet in length and weighed about 12 tons. Its bite, researchers say, was likely powerful enough to chomp a car in half. But some stats still suggest "Predator X" was bigger, so this real-life monster melee isn't over ... the mystery of Svalbard's "dish" was cleared up Monday on the premier episode of the traveling cooking show "En Bit av Norge." Andreas Viestad, a chef and author working out of a mobile kitchen, made goose with port wine and broccoli puree, pan-fried Svalbard cod, king crab, vegetables, chocolate cake and coffee. Not saying he chickened out with easy viewer-

PC choices (OK, maybe we are), but a menu of seal, Arctic Fox and Arctic Char would be more interesting viewing ... In addition to flat-Earth and fixed-Earth theorists, there's now UNIS Professor Doug Benn who's a self-admitted "Slushball Earth" theorist. But his hypothesis is on firmer terrain, so to speak, being a modified interpretation of the Snowball Earth theory that life survived a cataclysmic global freeze 700 million years ago in pockets of open ocean. Benn suggests the freeze was somewhat less extensive ... That Boeing 787 Dreamliner tested to much hype at Longyearbyen's Airport last year is turning into a "complete fiasco," according to a leading industry analyst, who says supposedly innovative materials and design are proving problematic in reality. "(It) might just become an interim product," he wrote.

## Celebrating years and Poles apart



Fireworks launched moments after midnight New Year's Day, above, help a Christmas tree light up a cold and windy night outside Svalbard Church. At right, John Guldahl, operations manager of the Norwegian Polar Institute, monitors a live camera feed of the Christmas Eve Mass at the church being transmitted to Norway's Troll research station in Antarctica. Those working at the station hope to make the first-time broadcast an annual tradition. Photos by Mark Sabbatini/Icepeople.



## HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

### New curriculum may put students' graduation at risk

A new education curriculum for secondary school students at Longyearbyen School does not comply with the Norwegian Education Act and may be putting students at risk of not getting a valid graduation certificate, according to Ministry of Education officials. Students take three teacher-led and two self-study courses with the plan, approved by city officials in November of 2008, instead of having teachers for all classes. The model also allows some courses to be offered every other year. Ministry officials said the school should not have enacted the changes without approval and they will review the case this month, with a backlog of other requests resulting in the delay until now. Proceeding with the changes this school year was an economic necessity since government funding to Longyearbyen doesn't allow it to match other regions, said Anne Ellingsen, the city's head of youth services, noting it would cost an extra 1.2 million kroner to comply with mainland standards. She said she does not believe students' certificates will ultimately be at risk.

### Last PCB capacitors being shipped out of Svalbard

The last PCB-containing capacitors in Svalbard are on their way out as Trust Arktikugol delivered them from Barentsburg to Longyearbyen. The three-year project removing 4,762 capacitors from fluorescent light fixtures in all Svalbard settlements will prevent the discharge of nearly 250 kilograms of PCB oil into the environment, according to the Svalbard governor's office.

### Company fined for building tourist cottage too high

Spitsbergen Experience has been fined 15,000 kroner for building a cottage in Adolfbukta too high. The company received permission in 2007 for the cottage, but inspectors with the Svalbard governor's office discovered it was 80 centimeters higher than approved. The extra height allowed Spitsbergen Experience to convert a designated sleeping loft into four small bedrooms.

## Legal landscape proves an adventure

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such as who can fly helicopters where, is cited by Fause as providing the job's highest and lowest moments.

"They are dealing with small problems and great adventures," he said of Svalbard's residents. But for leaders "it's very easy to make decisions without following the law."

The longtime prosecutor is returning to Tromsø after two years to serve as the lead district attorney for the Troms-Nord District. He will be succeeded in April by Lars Erik Alfheim, 39, an Oslo prosecutor, with legal advisor Marianne Linnestad serving during interim.

Fause said his intention from the start was to serve two years, bypassing the option for a third, and he expects Svalbard to remain part

of his work, mostly likely in large cases reaching the appellate court.

A 50,000-kroner verdict against the Russian mining company Trust Arktikugol for taking a film crew on an illegal helicopter flight is the most significant accomplishment of his Svalbard tenure, Fause said. He said the 2009 appellate verdict from the 2007 incident didn't result in a large fine, but set clear parameters for an often-troublesome pattern of behavior by Russians in Barentsburg.

"They are operating inside and often outside the application," he said. "I think that was a very important step to maintain law and order."

But authorizing illegal flight activity isn't just a Russian problem, Fause said.

**There's more! Visit [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net) for the complete story.**

## Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Fair. N winds at 18 km/h. High -23C (-33C wind chill), low -28C (-28C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. ENE winds at 14 km/h. High -21C (-30C wind chill), low -30C (-30C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. E winds at 11 km/h. High -22C (-30C wind chill), low -23C (-31C wind chill).	Snow. E winds at 18 km/h. High -17C (-26C wind chill), low -21C (-30C wind chill).
Sunrise: 0:00 Sunset 0:00	Sunrise: 0:00 Sunset 0:00	Sunrise: 0:00 Sunset 0:00	Sunrise: 0:00 Sunset 0:00
<b>Extended forecast:</b> Sunday, partly cloudy, -18C (-27C), -21C (-31C), light 0:00h; Monday, partly cloudy, -20C (-29C), -22C (-31C), light 0:00h; Tuesday, cloudy, -22C (-32C), -24C (-34C), light 0:00h; Wednesday, cloudy, -24C (-30C), -24C (-33C), light 0:00h.			
<b>Data provided by yr.no</b>			



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

A pathway of candles guides the way for those arriving Dec. 2 at the official opening of Kulturhuset, which replaces the 59-year-old Huset as Longyearbyen's main performing arts venue.

## News not all bad in 2010, but mostly so

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their possessions, most notably a kayaker trying to paddle around Spitsbergen. And food grinders intended to keep the kitchen plumbing of all Longyearbyen homes clear instead mucked them up in many ways – when they weren't in danger of catching fire.

But the news wasn't all bad, as 3D movies and a vastly upgraded performing arts stage offered a diversion at the end of the year. Russians in Barentsburg saw a reversal to their years of misfortune when mining resumed after a fire halted operations in 2008. And there was always the unusual zaniness, such as the Nazis invading Svalbard as part of a record-selling video game and Longyearbyen's airport being named as one of the world's 18 strangest.

The following are the 10 most newsworthy stories of 2010, in *Icepeople's* highly subjective and not entirely informed judgement:

#### 1. Store Norske corruption scandal

Robert Hermansen, administrative director of Store Norske from 1999 to 2008, is facing criminal charges for the "gross misappropriation" of hundreds of millions of kroner in deals with subcontractors. Audits found the contracts were far above market value, and Hermansen received private loans and other benefits.

Charges were also filed against the sub-

### The top 10 of 2010

1. Store Norske corruption scandal
2. Polar bear attacks kayaker in tent
3. Huset closes/Kulturhuset opens
4. Food grinders muck up home sinks
5. Health care services under scrutiny
6. Warming poses new bear threats
7. Russians lose helicopter tour case
8. New security requirements enacted
9. Mining resumes in Barentsburg
10. Fuel dispute threatens Ny-Ålesund

contractors and top executives who resigned as the investigation continued. Hermansen, maintaining his innocence, claims Store Norske is using him as a scapegoat to renegotiate deals on more favorable terms. A slew of ugly legal fights is likely to dominate local headlines for years to come.

#### 2. Bear attacks kayaker in tent

This was far from the most significant news to locals, but nothing else grabbed the outside world's attention as much as Sebastian Plur Nilssen's encounter with a polar bear that dragged the kayaker out of his tent and across a beach.

**There's more! Visit [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net) for the complete story.**

## 2011 a year for past heroes, future struggles

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prominence in May when a restored villa in Ny-Ålesund used by Amundsen during the 1920s is scheduled to reopen as a reception and executive housing facility. The other major celebrations are Nansen's birthday Oct. 10 and Amundsen's South Pole conquest Dec. 14.

Longyearbyen residents will get their say about more current events in October during the election for the 15-member municipal council. Familiar issues such as deficiencies in school curriculum, health care services and in-

frastructure – often blamed on a shortage of national government funding – are likely to be prominent.

The council's makeup after the 2007 election consisted of seven members from the Labor Party, four Bipartisan, four Right and one Svalbard Lista.

Longyearbyen is among 20 cities where 16- and 17-year-olds will be able to vote for the first time as part of a trial program.

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## What's up

### Jan. 5

6 p.m.: Movie: "Despicable Me" (3D), U.S. animated/family, all ages. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Fair Game," U.S. action/drama, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

### Jan. 9

8 p.m.: Movie: "The Gods and Humans," French drama, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

### Jan. 12

6 p.m.: Movie: "Jackass" (3D), U.S. comedy/documentary, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Fritt Vilt III," Norwegian horror film, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

### Jan. 15

2 p.m.: Presentation by Aino Grib about staging the "Mellom Linjene" literary exhibition during KunstPause Svalbard 2010. Longyearbyen Library.

### Jan. 16

8 p.m.: Movie: "Red," U.S. action, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

### Jan 18 and 20

8 p.m.: Svalbard Seminar, presented by the Norwegian Polar Institute. Møysalen, UNIS.

### Jan. 21

8 p.m.: Movie: "Get Low," Polish/German/U.S. comedy/drama. Norwegian premier. Kulturhuset.

### Jan. 22

2 p.m.: Per Kyrre Reymert discusses his novel "I Polarnattens Favn," a Svalbard action/thriller about Øvre Richter Frich in 1912. Longyearbyen Library.

5 p.m.: Spitsbergen Up and Down race. For more information contact [spitsbergenupanddown@gmail.com](mailto:spitsbergenupanddown@gmail.com).

### Jan 25 and 27

8 p.m.: Svalbard Seminar, presented by the Norwegian Polar Institute. Møysalen, UNIS.

## 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:

- *Arctic search and rescue treaty in works*
- *U.K.: No need to halt drilling in far north*
- *WikiLeaks shows fight for Antarctic flights*
- *Imagining a skin that can repeal ice*