



Massive meltdown

Sea level, temperatures to rise much faster than predicted a few years ago

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

The climate change skeptics are right – scientists are admitting their recent ominous predictions are wrong. The situation is, in fact, much worse.

Melting Arctic glaciers and ice caps are now expected help global sea levels rise 90 to 160 centimeters by 2100, a drastic increase from the 19 to 59 centimeters projected in 2007. Similar changes in temperatures and precipitation are expected to have major impacts on ecosystems and settled areas worldwide.

The six years between 2005 and 2010 are the warmest period ever recorded in the Arctic, according to the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program in Oslo, in a summary of the findings by hundreds of researchers participating in the project.

"They are not coincidental," said Margareta Johansson, a researcher at Lunds University in Sweden who is one of the authors of a report detailing the findings. "The trends are unequivocal and deviate from the norm when compared with a longer term perspective."

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AMAP

An Arctic inhabitant peers over the edge of an ice sheet that may become a rarity within a few decades as temperatures rise.

A record race for everyone

All-time high of 520 participants compete – or meander – under sunny skies at annual Skimarathon

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

It was just Andi Rafiandi's fourth time on skis and he was a long way from his balmy home in Jakarta. But he can go back saying he holds a record in the world's northernmost ski marathon.

Rafiandi, 37, a student at the University of Oslo who is also working with a company in the

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MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Gro Lykke, left, and Jenny Bruu, both of Oslo, celebrate Saturday as they cross the finish line of the 19th annual Spitsbergen Skimarathon. Both said they expected to complete the 42-kilometer course in roughly the five hours they were on the trail, as they took time to talk with volunteers at food stations and admire the scenery along the way.

Lots of doors, but few openings



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Ole Andre Kylgaard leads a group of visiting Jehovah's Witnesses in prayer during a meeting at Longyearbyen Library this week.

Visiting Jehovah's Witnesses praise Svalbard's diversity, but find few converts to the 'Truth'

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

Ole Andre Kylgaard knows he isn't likely to get the warmest welcome from locals when visiting Svalbard, but he doesn't hold it against them. He's used to it everywhere he goes.

Kylgaard, 46, of Oslo, and his eight travel companions are trying to knock on most of Longyearbyen's doors during their week here

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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 puny porkers as pets



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A family's efforts to bring Canadian mini-pigs to Longyearbyen is being denied by the Norwegian Food Safety Authority, whose officials are worried about diseases and the suitability of the area as a living environment for what admirers call the "pets of the future." Lene Villumsen told NRK last week her son, Frederik, 12, is fond of animals, but allergic to fur. He saw a TV program about the species, some of which grow no larger than about 30 centimeters and 10 kilograms, and the family says it is "incomprehensible" the pigs would be banned when dogs are allowed. FSA officials said there are no vaccines permissible for use on the animals in Norway and their behavior is closer to cats than dogs, the former of which are banned in Svalbard.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

"Find the local angle" is the mantra of cranky newsroom editors and obviously the big story this week is the death of Osama bin Laden (or faking thereof, if you believe the latest conspiracy theory). We've got the obvious connection with Yusuf al-Qaradawi declaring he wants to live in Norway to determine Islamic prayer times in polar areas, since he's been denounced as more dangerous than bin Laden (obviously true now, assuming the latter really is dead). The latest there is Oslo Cathedral's Dean, Olav Dag Hauge, generating a bunch of controversy by stating al-Qaradawi is an "important" person who should be allowed to come here as long as he obeys the law. Other local tie-ins are more elusive, although an "aspiring climate modeler" blogging as "naomithenorth" notes that during her firearms training at Longyearbyen's shooting range most people were shooting "at pictures of Osama bin Laden" and an assortment of zombies. "Talk about irrational fears," she added. "Do any of those people think they're ever actually going to run into a zombie? The chances are about as good that they'll ever get a clear shot at Osama bin Laden." ... Speaking of zombies, the latest spook story inspired by Svalbard is the children's novel "Dark Matter" by British author Michelle Paver. "The special thing about the Arctic, that it is light all summer and dark all winter, had been staring me in the face," she told the *Elmbridge Guardian* ...

While we're on repetitive and ominous themes, the doomsday criers are back, so to speak, regarding the Svalbard Global Seed Vault. An article in the Oregon newspaper *Capital Press* quotes biotech critics who say having other seed facilities deposit samples here as an ultimate safeguard "commits them to sharing those genetic materials" with biotech developers. "This is one-stop shopping for the corporations," said Andrew Kimbrell, executive director of the Center for Food Safety, who says the project is akin to creating a zoo for endangered species rather than trying to protect them in the wild ... Finally, having transitioned to evil corporations taking over the world, we rolled our eyes in hopeless resignation when Starbucks recently arrived in Longyearbyen in the form of pre-packaged coffee drinks. But clearly we're hypocritical bastards, since we may have been the first to snag pints of Ben and Jerry's ice cream now being sold at the Mix kiosk. Gry Sneltuedt, owner of the kiosk, said the super-premium brand is being offered in a few locations around Norway and Svalbard is one of the lucky ones. They don't have our favorite four or five flavors, but they do have some regional exclusives including "Nordic Water Peace," described as sweet-cream ice cream with chocolate cookie crumbs, chocolate toffee sauce and chocolate-flavored peace symbols. Only 1,150 calories per container, meaning you can eat two a day and still maintain your figure.



AMAP

Increasing industrial activity in the Arctic is expected to contribute to an accelerating rise in temperatures in those areas, even if current emission levels are reduced, according to researchers.

Winters may be 6°C warmer by 2080

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The findings update forecasts by the United Nations' expert panel on climate change in its last major assessment four years ago. They are being presented this week to 400 international scientists in Copenhagen and to the eight-nation Arctic Council next week in Greenland.

Average Arctic snow cover in May and June has decreased nearly 20 percent in recent decades and seas may be ice-free during the summer within 30 years, the report states.

"Average Arctic autumn-winter temperatures are projected to increase by between 3 and 6°C by 2080, even using scenarios in which greenhouse gas emissions are projected to be lower than they have been for the past ten years."

"The greatest increase in surface air temperature has happened in autumn, in regions

where sea ice has disappeared by the end of summer. This suggests that the sea is absorbing more of the sun's energy during the summer because of the loss of ice cover. The extra energy is being released as heat in autumn, further warming the Arctic lower atmosphere."

Gordon Hamilton, a glaciologist and professor at the University of Maine Climate Change Institute, told Voice of America the change in predictions is due to conditions that are defying traditional thinking.

"Six years ago we didn't think that ice sheets responded to climate change on a time scale any shorter than a few thousand years, whereas now we are seeing the big ice sheets in Greenland and west Antarctica respond in just a few months to triggers that are coming from the climate systems," he said.

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

Svalbard's diversity a plus for Witnesses

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as part of their ministry for Jehovah's Witnesses. There's no known members among Longyearbyen residents, but Klygaard said members of the Oslo chapter try to visit regularly – every year or so – to spread what they call the "Truth."

"Longyearbyen reminds me of a small city – lots of languages, different cultures," he said, comparing ministry work here to other communities in Norway.

Foreign residents tend to be more devout and open-minded about listening, said Klygaard's wife, Trine, making her third ministry visit. She said an earlier trip to the Russian community of Barentsburg was also rewarding, even though increasing resistance to minority

religions in Russia itself has resulted in lawsuits and members being denied recognition in Moscow.

"They were taking us into their homes, they were all wanting to feed us," she said.

That's warmer than the reception they got this year in Longyearbyen, where nobody turned out for a discussion and film presentation at Longyearbyen Library. About 20 residents, most of whom asked not to be named so they won't be "targeted" for their non-belief, expressed indifference to annoyance about the group – and don't want a visit from them.

"They're very nice, clean people, but I don't care for their message," one woman said.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

UNIS leader gets local Labor Party nod to replace mayor

Christin Kristoffersen is the new Svalbard Labor Party nominee for this fall's Longyearbyen Local Council election as Mayor Kjell Mork prepares to leave office. Kristoffersen, 37, received 15 of the 20 votes at a party meeting Monday. She moved with her husband and two children from London to Longyearbyen in 2009, working as the head of the Academic and Research Department at The University Centre in Svalbard. "I do not have a long career in politics, but I have been active and engaged," said Kristoffersen, who is a member of the Bydrift and harbor boards. She said she will give up her UNIS job if selected to lead the council after the election.

Head of Store Norske retiring

Store Norske is searching for a new administrative director as Bjørn Arnestad says he is retiring in March of next year. Arnestad, 65, said he originally agreed to a three-year contract in 2008 and then agreed to stay an extra year at the request of the company. But he said Store Norske is now facing a period of considerable transition due to a series of corruption scandals with subcontractors and the opening of a new coal mine at Lunckefjellet. "It is a right time for both me and the company to hand over the baton to another," he said. A committee has already spent months searching for a new director, but is not stating if there are any leading candidates.

Miner hospitalized with burns after short-circuit at Svea

A man in his 50s was hospitalized after receiving burns from an electrical accident at Svea. The mining electrician for Store Norske was working on a power supply unit Monday morning when it short-circuited, burning his face and upper chest. "He was wearing eye protection, so he saved his eyes," said Arild Lyssand, police chief for the Svalbard governor's office. The man was flown by helicopter to Longyearbyen Hospital, where he was described as in good condition with first-degree burns. Officials with the governor's office and Norwegian Labour Inspectorate are investigating the incident.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Clearing. N winds to 11 km/h. High -2C (-5C wind chill), low -5C (-10C wind chill).	Mostly sunny. Variable winds to 7 km/h. High -3C (-6C wind chill), low -7C (-11C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. E winds to 7 km/h. High -3C (-6C wind chill), low -5C (-5C wind chill).	Snow. E winds to 11 km/h. High -3C (-7C wind chill), low -6C (-9C wind chill).
Sunrise/sunset 24-hour light	Sunrise/sunset: 24-hour light	Sunrise/sunset 24-hour light	Sunrise/sunset 24-hour light
Extended forecast: Sunday, snow ending, -2C (-5C), -3C (-7C), light 24:00h; Monday, light snow, -3C (-7C), -4C (-8C), light 24:00h; Tuesday, p. cloudy, -4C (-9C), -6C (-11C), light 24:00h; Wednesday, p. cloudy, -5C (-10C), -6C (-11C), light 24:00h.			
Data provided by yr.no			



COURTESY OF ANDY RAFIANDI



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Andi Rafiandi, middle of top photo, sheds his heavy layer of clothes after the Jakarta native crosses the finish line of the Spitsbergen Skimarathon. At bottom left, Jon Ross and Jørn Tore Hove, both of Oslo, replace lost fluids with some fermented grain beverage in front of the Spitsbergen Hotel after the race. Other racers, bottom right, refuel in a more legal way at the finish line's snack station.

Times matter little in record ski marathon

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city, was among 520 participants Saturday in the 19th annual Svalbard Skimarathon beginning at Mine 6. A total of 270 competed for times on the full 42-kilometer course, while Rafiandi and others strode at whatever pace suited them for full- and half-lengths.

He nearly pulled out the night before because of an injured ankle, and was wearing two pairs of long underwear and two jackets despite a sunny day locals would generally consider warm. But he made it nearly to the turning point of the half-marathon, taking pictures and describing the experience in video clips, before his injury forced him to turn back.

"When I started everybody was already gone, so I didn't see anyone," Rafiandi said afterward, repeating a theme of loneliness expressed in the videos. "Everything's so wide and I've never seen a polar bear before."

Fortunately, he and the other racers had rifle-bearing volunteers on snowmobiles patrolling the course, plus other helpers offering food and drinks at stations along the way. Participants were also required to carry packs with a specific list of equipment for emergencies.

Even so, for most skiers it was a carefree day without much concern for petty things like

race times, even in the "competitive" classes.

"That was a very stupid question," said Torgeir Stensrud, 62, when asked how he felt about finishing 24th of 25 racers in his age class for the full marathon with a time of four hours, 48 minutes and three seconds. "Look here, look there, smell the air ... The only thing I care about is everything I see, the weather, the experience."

The winner of the race was Artem Onishchenko of Russia with a time of two hours, two minutes and 28 seconds. Nina Lintzén of Sweden was the women's winner with a time of two hours, 20 minutes and 35 seconds.

About 450 people participated in the 2009 race, but the total dropped to about 380 last year due to a series of volcano eruptions in Iceland disrupting flights throughout Europe. This year's total was so high Leif-Erik Stormoen, director of the race, told *Svalbardposten* a registration limit may be necessary in the future.

"It's great fun that so many showed up," he said. But ... we must see whether we should put a cap next year. It starts to get to be too many to be responsible for and manage. I'm thinking mostly of security if there is bad weather."

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

What's up

May 4

8 p.m.: Movie: "The Way Back," U.S. drama, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

May 7

Noon-6 p.m.: Thai cafe hosted by Thai Folk Klubben. Proceeds benefit flood disaster relief for south Thailand. UNIS.

May 8

Family day at Isfjord Radio, with fishing, BYO cookout, ski tours and other activities. Overnight accommodations available. Contact torgeirprytz@gmail.com for more details.

6 p.m.: Movie: "Jørgen + Anne = Sant," Norwegian children's film, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Scream 4," U.S. horror/thriller, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

May 9

10:15 a.m.: Environmental and Economic Committee meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

May 10

10 a.m.: Administration Committee meeting, Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

6 p.m.: Spring riding lessons begin at Svalbard Hestesenter. Contact Bente Charlotte Bull at 9241 4969 for registration information and weekly times by age group.

May 11

8 p.m.: Movie: "Essential killing," Norwegian/Polish thriller/crime, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

May 12

9 a.m.: Board of Growing Enterprises Authority meeting, Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

3 p.m.: Board of City Operation Authority meeting, Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

May 15

8 p.m.: Movie: "Umeå4Ever," Norwegian comedy, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

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:

- *Norway a superpower due to warming?*
- *Canada vote to increase claims to Arctic*
- *Health care an 'urgent' problem in Arctic*
- *Emmy-winning film of Barrow free online*