



Russian dancers from Barentsburg perform the climax of a traditional song and dance show Saturday night at Huset as part of an annual cultural exchange with Longyearbyen.

## Sounding off on the neighbors

*Russians bring their song and dance act to town as longtime local diva heads for Tromsø*

High-kicking can-can dancers and canned ABBA-inspired pop beats aren't the textbook description of traditional Russian music, but some neighbors taking a break from their old-style hardships showed they're up-to-date on cutting it loose.

Sixteen residents from Barentsburg sang, danced in an assortment of costumes and  
**See CULTURE, page 3**

## UNIS hit close to home by money woes

*Drop in Norwegian students, paying for new housing among challenges cited in annual report*

The percentage of Norwegian students at The University Centre in Svalbard dropped 14 percent in 2009 due to a cost-saving reduction in courses offered, according to the university's annual report.

UNIS finished the year with a 1.7 million kroner surplus, an increase in externally funded  
**See UNIS, page 4**



Bringing up the rear doesn't dampen the spirits of runners during the early stages of the annual Spitsbergen Marathon on Saturday. A total of 106 people, more than half from other countries, participated in full, half and 10K races.

## A long slog just to the start line

*Many foreigners feel the burn and chill at Spitsbergen Marathon*

Tim Boone wanted something different for his 80th marathon, but adding to his trophy collection with a fast time wasn't a high priority.

"Sometime before dark," the resident of Arun, Britain, said when asked his goal for reaching the finish line. "That's September, isn't it?"

It is for those running the annual Spitsbergen Marathon, although rifle-bearing guides monitoring Saturday's race on all-terrain vehicles weren't planning to offer their protection from polar bears past mid-afternoon. Fortunately, Boone finished the 42-kilometer course three hours, 39 minutes and 36 seconds

**See MARATHON, page 2**

### Inside

**Warm worries at Arctic summit**

Page 2

**Headlines from Svalbardposten**

- Conditions for service workers questioned
- Gag order demand to buy dog kennels?
- Cargo ship resumes trips as strike ends

Page 3

**Weather forecast**

Page 3

**Events calendar**

Page 4

## Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

### 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) 673-4472

### E-mail

marksabbatini@yahoo.com

### Web site

www.icepeople.net

*Icepeople* is published weekly (or thereabouts) on Tuesdays (or thereabouts), with printed copies available free on a limited basis in Longyearbyen. Additional printed copies are available locally and by mail upon request. Charges are on an "at cost" basis.

## Copyright stuff

Original contents of this publication can be reproduced for non-commercial purposes free of charge if *Icepeople* is credited as the source. The original writers, photographers and other contributors retain their rights to all published works.

## 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.

## A most welcome Chinese invasion



The Hurtigruten ferry *Fram* is inspected by a helicopter from the Svalbard governor's office after docking Monday in Longyearbyen. The vessel is the first cruise ship to arrive this season, completing an 11-day "climate pilgrimage" in the northern mainland and Spitsbergen, with about 100 of the 193 passengers coming from China. A travel manager for the group told P4 Radio many of the members participated in a previous Arctic voyages and were interested in the issues raised during the climate cruise, which included field studies and visits to research stations.

## Runners say long trip is no sweat

### MARATHON, from page 1

after the 10 a.m. start, which also was good for second place in the men's 51-60 age division.

Foreigners represented 57 of the 106 runners participating in full, half and 10K courses through most of the major streets of Longyearbyen. Most were from Europe, although some came from as far as Japan, India, Canada and the United States to test their endurance in a setting offering some distraction from the pain.

"I feel like I'm living in a fairy tale, something magic," said Anna Sacco Botto, 51, of Asti, Italy. An easy thing to say before the race, but the euphoria persevered with the sore muscles after she won the overall women's title in

three hours, 41 minutes and 49 seconds.

Botto said she didn't do any special training for the Arctic conditions, and wasn't put off by rough roads and possibility of polar bears.

"I think it's even easier for me because I like to run in the cold," said Botto, who completed her 17th marathon.

Gjermund Thorson Nordskar, a student at the University Centre in Svalbard, was the overall winner with a time of three hours, four minutes and 26 seconds. The half marathon winner was Eirik Gramstad of Norway with a time of 1:12:09.

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

## Briefly

### Record-size conference on polar science begins

A possible 1.5-meter rise in sea levels by the end of the what is expected to be the warmest century ever provided an eye-opening welcome for more than 2,000 scientists in more than 60 countries gathering today for a five-day polar science conference in Lillestrom.

The gathering, which organizers said is the largest ever by polar scientists, features 1,200 scheduled scientific presentations from the International Polar Year (which was actually a two-year period from March 2007 until March 2009).

The dominant focus is climate change, which is occurring most severely in Arctic regions that may in turn cause some of the biggest global consequences.

A report about the potential sea level rise by the Norwegian Polar Institute notes the Arctic and Antarctic will account for 75 percent of the increase. About 150 million people living on coastlines and about one meter inland would be directly affected.

Debate is expected on individual presentations as well as which issues deserve priority. For instance, Mojib Latif, a German scientist, said it's uncertain if the reduction of sea ice is a long-term phenomenon.

"It is also unclear if it is anthropogenic or because of the changes in the ocean currents," he told China's Xinhua News Agency. "Even though these questions are unanswered, it is certain that the reduction of the sea ice affects the climate on the Earth."

### Car, helicopter chases polar bear from Nybyen

A polar bear spotted in Nybyen was chased away using a helicopter from the Svalbard governor's office today, the latest of several recent bear sightings in or near settlements.

The governor's office received a report at about 10 p.m. of tracks leading from Platåberget down to Sverdrupbyen. Officials spotted the bear in Nybyen and chased it to Longyearbreen using warning shots and a car. From there a helicopter followed it over the glacier to Fardalen.



Susanne Hansen performs her final concert as a longtime Svalbard resident with the Longyearbyen Storband at Huset on Saturday night. The concert was at a banquet for residents of Barentsburg, following their show of Russian folk music and dance in the building's main theater.

## Hard work leaves little time for songs

**CULTURE, from page 1**

played instruments from balalaikas to synthesizers Saturday night at Huset. The song introductions in heavily accented English were hard enough to decipher for a native speaker – let alone those for whom it's a second language – but the gist was they covered well-known tales of travel, love and military triumphs by Russia and the Ukraine.

"These songs are so popular many Russians consider them the national folk music," said Vitaly Shutko, the emcee for the performance, before a set of songs featuring the '80s pop track and another with strong undercurrents of Simon and Garfunkel.

The show was their contribution to an annual cultural exchange that saw Longyearbyen performers visit the Russian mining community two weeks ago. Russians making the trip here got an extra dose of Norwegian culture at a banquet featuring the final performance of one of the area's most prolific young singers.

It was yet another reminder how different, yet similar, the neighboring settlements are as their parent governments engage in a complex relationship of cooperation and conflict.

Residents of both communities come to work long hours and revere the Arctic setting. But while Norwegians enjoy high pay and abundant recreation, their Russian neighbors are struggling to reestablish mining and tourism industries in a decaying community lacking many basics and experiencing a severe long-term population decline.

"We have not a lot of concerts in Barentsburg," said Shutko, who is also the tourist manager for the state-owned Arktikugol trust, which oversees operations in the settlement. "People work. When they have the day off they get together."

Workers started preparing their Longyearbyen show about a month ago and took the stage in Barentsburg for a Victory Day performance May 9, Shutko said. He said performances will continue through the summer for cruise ship visitors.

This year's show in Longyearbyen didn't have anything as cheeky as the guys in negligees last year, but an audience of more than 200 offered a standing ovation following the finale featuring a quartet of women doing a high-kick number in provocative red outfits.

The visit was short, with barely time for lunch and a soundcheck before taking the stage. But they got to indulge afterward at a banquet in the restaurant downstairs where another notable cultural figure hailed by one musician as "the Beth Midler of Longyearbyen" provided the entertainment.

Susanne Hansen, 30, departing next week for Tromsø, performed standards with the Longyearbyen Storband that were well-familiar to those watching her sing for most of her 23 years in Svalbard. She said musical entertainment and opportunities have grown tremendously during her time here.

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

## HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

### Work conditions for service employees questioned

Questions are being raised about work conditions for restaurant and entertainment workers in Longyearbyen by labor officials who say 12-hour shifts without overtime and little advance notice of schedules is occurring. Audun Kristoffersen, a Tromsø district official with Trade Unions Norway (LO), visited businesses in mid-May and said conditions would be better with collective agreements at some locations, which he did not specify. Huset does not have such an agreement, but employees have not tried to organize, said Executive Director André Grytbakk. Some employees at Svalbar and Kroa also do not operate under a labor agreement, with union staff for Spitsbergen Travel saying a special arrangement covers "only a small part of the national agreement." Karls-Berger Pub has a labor agreement for all employees.

### Tour company: Gag order demanded to buy kennels

Svalbard Villmarkssenter has decided not to purchase Svalbard Huskies, saying Store Norske wants a gag order to operate on the company's land. "As a certified ecotourism business, we are obliged to express an opinion on matters relating to nature," said Karl Våtvik, co-owner of Svalbard Villmarkssenter with his wife, Berit. Store Norske isn't demanding a gag order, but "we expect them to contact us first," said Dag Ivar Brekke, vice administrative director of the company. He said others have signed similar contracts, which contain a clause about being aware of noise and traffic caused by mining in the area, without making similar interpretations.

### Cargo ship resumes trips as transportation strike ends

The cargo ship *Norbjørn* is scheduled to resume voyages to Longyearbyen on Friday after Bring Logistics announced Monday a transportation strike on the mainland is over. The vessel is scheduled to arrive in Longyearbyen next Monday after its voyage last week was canceled.

## Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

### Wednesday

Mostly cloudy with early snow. ENE winds at 5 km/h. High 0C (-2C wind chill), low -1C (-2C wind chill).

### Thursday

Partly sunny. W winds at 5 km/h. High 0C (-2C wind chill), low -1C (-1C wind chill).

### Friday

Sunny. NNW winds at 2 km/h. High 1C (1C wind chill), low -1C (-1C wind chill).

### Saturday

Sunny. N winds at 3 km/h. High 1C (0C wind chill), low -1C (-1C wind chill).

**Extended forecast:** Sunday, sunny, 1C (-1C), -1C (-2C); Monday, sunny, 2C (0C), -1C (-1C); Tuesday, sunny with late clouds, 2C (0C), 1C (0C); Wednesday, mostly cloudy with a shower, 4C (1C), -1C (-2C).

Data provided by [AccuWeather.com](http://AccuWeather.com)

Scientists at The University Centre In Svalbard conduct field work in April of 2009 for the ICeBoUND project on top of Munken mountain in Northwestern Spitsbergen. One Ph.D. student in Arctic Geology defended her thesis and seven master's students graduated in 2009, the largest class "by far" for the department, according to UNIS' annual report. Photo by Endre Før Gjermundsen.



## Cost cutting gets university out of deficit

### UNIS, from page 1

research projects, and numerous projects and events attracting international interest, the report posted Thursday at the university's Web site states. A total of 353 students completed courses, up from 334 in 2008, but 35 percent of last year's students were from Norway compared to 49 percent the previous year.

"The application figures for our courses in 2009 were generally good, and several courses attracted twice as many applications as available study places," the report notes. "However, owing to financial reasons, UNIS reduced its course portfolio in the autumn semester and this has particularly affected Norwegian students' interest in UNIS."

The ratio of Norwegian students is expected to increase in 2010, but not necessarily to previous levels, wrote Helen Flå, assistant director at UNIS, in an e-mail interview.

"It will take a longer time to get the students back," she wrote. "We will gradually induct the courses that were cut in 2009 and more Norwegian students will again take courses here, but it will take time."

Germans were the largest foreign group with 16 percent of all students, with their eight percent jump from 2008 also the largest increase. Flå said UNIS officials "don't know exactly" what caused the increase.

"We had a lot of German press here, both from newspapers and TV," she wrote. "Maybe we got some free publicity. Besides, the Germans have always been interested in the Arctic region."

Thirteen percent of UNIS students in 2009 came from other Nordic countries, nine percent from the United Kingdom, six percent from The Netherlands, and four percent each from Russia and the United States.

Financially, "the year 2009 was marked by restructuring" after incurring a 3.4 million kroner deficit in 2008.

"Cost-saving measures were implemented in a host of areas and reductions were made to both the course portfolio and staffing levels," the report states. "These measures have worked, and UNIS ends the year with a surplus."

UNIS received 83.7 million kroner from the

Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, up from 78.7 million kroner in 2008, 28.2 million kroner in external research project funds, and 12.3 million kroner for consulting and rental services.

"Compared with last year, the income from consultancy services is double," the report notes. "UNIS has also experienced an increase in external funding for research from 8 percent of its gross income in 2001 to 23 percent in 2009."

Among the financial hurdles UNIS faces is providing adequate housing for students and guest lecturers. A 52-unit apartment complex scheduled for completion by early next year will replace older housing sold recently by private owners and the university. But UNIS ended 2009 with 35.8 million kroner in housing loans which, along with furnishings for the apartments, must be paid for from the operating budget.

"A major challenge in the years ahead will be to obtain income over and above the ordinary appropriations from the Ministry of Education and Research in order to handle the liquidity requirements resulting from the loan related to the purchase of apartments and requirements for renewing equipment," the report notes.

The report's assessment of academic and research achievements is more upbeat, noting scientists published 63 articles in referenced journals and 10 chapters in books in 2009, compared to 52 and nine, respectively, in 2008. Nearly 200 Norwegian and international media reports focussed on UNIS, with highlights including a visit by U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. A regular series of Svalbard Seminars "had the highest visitor numbers since the 1990s."

One area that suffered was the library, with a 26 percent drop in visitors and 13 percent drop in loans "believed to be linked with the reduction of staff." But despite extensive field research and mandatory safety courses, there were no significant calamities other than one staff member injuring a finger "in an occupational accident."

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

## What's up

### June 10

10:15 a.m.: City operations authority board meeting. Næringsbygget 1, Tundra room.

2 p.m.: Board of culture and leisure meeting. Næringsbygget 1, Tundra room.

6-10 p.m.: Longyearbyen Day historic tour and discussion. Begins at Skjæringa monument.

### June 11

9 a.m.: Control of growth enterprises meeting. Næringsbygget 1, Tundra room.

4:30 p.m.: Sirkus Svalnardo classes for fifth- to eighth-grade students by visiting instructors. Continues June 12.

Svalbardhallen. Register by June 9 at [strak\\_salto@hotmail.co](mailto:strak_salto@hotmail.co).

### June 13

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Kick-Ass," U.S. action/comedy, ages 15 and up. Huset.

### June 15

7 p.m.: Meeting of the local board. Lompensenteret, Mediateket.

### June 18

Last day of school before summer break.

### June 20

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Date Night," U.S. action/comedy, ages 11 and up. Huset.

### June 21

10:15: Environmental and industrial committee meeting. Næringsbygget 1, Tundra room.

### June 27

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Clash of the Titans," U.S. fantasy/adventure, ages 11 and up. Huset.

### July 4

11 a.m.: Liturgy. 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:

- *Norway halts North Sea oil drilling*
- *Gulf spill damage may last decades*
- *Finland drafts strategy for the Arctic*
- *Climate used to study odds of alien life*