



SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS JANUARY 15, 2019 / 1:06 AM / 15 DAYS AGO

Norway Supreme Court hears snow crab case with implication for oil

Gwladys Fouche

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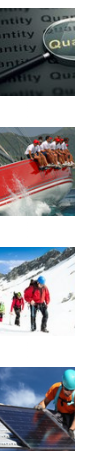
OSLO (Reuters) - Norway's Supreme Court began hearing arguments on Tuesday on whether EU ships can fish for snow crab off Arctic islands north of Norway without permission from Oslo, a case that could decide who has the right to explore for oil in the region.



FILE PHOTO: A view shows a beach at the Ny-Aalesund research station on the Arctic archipelago of Svalbard, Norway, September 20, 2016. Picture taken September 20, 2016. REUTERS/Gwladys Fouche/File Photo

At stake is whether the snow crab - whose meat is considered a delicacy by gourmets in

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Japan and South Korea - is a sedentary species living on the seabed or a fish stock that moves around - and who gets to decide about it.

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If it is seen as a sedentary species, then it is a resource belonging to the continental shelf of Norway. If the EU can stake a claim over the snow crab, then it could be harder for Oslo to secure its claim over potential oil and gas resources.

“The question of the snow crab is a proxy for oil. Because what is valid for the snow crab is valid for the oil industry,” Oeystein Jensen, a senior research fellow in law at the Fridtjof Nansen Institute in Oslo, told Reuters.

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The verdict is expected in three to four weeks.

The issue arises out of a conviction for illegal fishing of an EU fishing vessel, the Senator, in the waters off the remote Arctic Svalbard archipelago.

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Norway, which is not a member of the EU, argued successfully in a lower court that the European Commission does not have the right to issue fishing licenses off Svalbard, over which Norway has sovereignty via a 1920 treaty.

The ship's owner, Latvian fisherman Peteris Pildegovics, is appealing that ruling to the Supreme Court and seeks to assert a right to fish for snow crab off Svalbard.

“There was no need for a Norwegian license,” Pildegovics told Reuters. “We followed the procedure. Norwegian authorities were kept fully informed.”

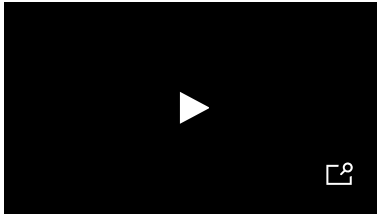
Pildegovics estimated the loss of income due to the ship's ongoing seizure at about 20 million euros a year.

Norway says only it has the right to issue fishing license for snow crab.

“The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea - the constitution of the seas - is clear on this. It is only Norway as a coastal state that can give permission to fish on

the Norwegian continental shelf,” Foreign Minister Ine Eriksen Soereide said in an April 2018 column.

In a sign of the importance the case has for Norway, a panel of 11 Supreme Court judges, a higher than usual number, will listen to the arguments during the three-day session starting on Tuesday.



North Korea's air is growing increasingly toxic

Jensen, the academic, said that according to international law it is only coastal states that can grant licenses for the management of natural resources. “So Norway, via Svalbard, is the coastal state in charge,” he said.

“Now, the 1920 Svalbard Treaty forces Norway to treat all signatories fairly. The EU does not have the right to issue licenses, but the treaty perhaps grants the EU the right to be equally treated. The EU, by issuing their own licenses, has ignored these steps and ignored international law,” he said.

(\$1 = 0.8718 euros)

Editing by William Maclean

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ENERGY JANUARY 30, 2019 / 11:32 AM / UPDATED 9 HOURS AGO

Russia's Gazprom plans to build an LNG plant to supply disputed Kurils

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MOSCOW, Jan 30 (Reuters) - Russian state gas company Gazprom plans to build a small-scale liquefied natural gas (LNG) plant on the Pacific island of Sakhalin to supply the disputed Kuril Islands, the Sakhalin regional government said on Wednesday.

Russia and Japan are in talks over ownership of the chain of islands which were captured by Soviet troops from Japan during the final days of World War Two.

The islands are known as the Southern Kurils in Russia and the Northern Territories in Japan.

The Sakhalin government said in a statement that the planned plant would have a capacity of up to 100,000 tonnes of LNG per year which would be shipped to the disputed islands to produce electricity there. No timeframe was given. (Reporting by Oksana Kobzeva; writing by Katya Golubkova; editing by Jason Neely)

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