

IN SPORTS: THE YANKEES END A MISERABLE MONTH WITH ANOTHER LOSS TO THE RED SOX

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Seaman Juan Reyes climbs to the top of a lighted bell buoy on the deck of the Coast Guard cutter Juniper on Bartlett Reef in Long Island Sound to replace the light with a new LED beacon. The upward-facing solar panels are convenient roosts for sea birds, but they lose efficiency when they get covered in bird guano.

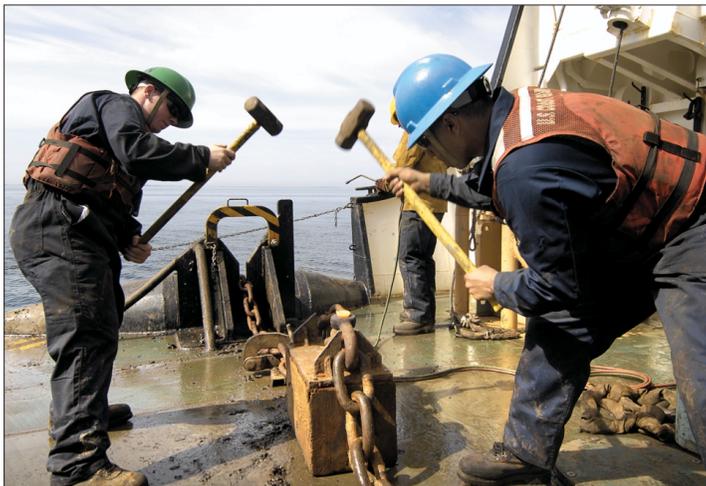
HEAVY LIFTING AT SEA

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Gallery > Go online for a day at sea in photographs onboard the buoy tender Juniper.

Right, Chief Warrant Officer Michael Tomasi gives hand signals to crane operator Yeoman 2nd class Jennifer Fattorusso as the Bartlett Reef buoy, located less than a mile off East Lyme, is lowered back on station.

Below, In an age-old process the Coast Guardsmen call "heat and beat," Seamen Dillon Smith, left, and Juan Reyes, right, pound the end of a superheated shackle pin to repair a damaged section of buoy anchor chain.



With modern electronics and old-style sledge hammers, Coast Guard works to undo the mess birds make on buoys

Story by JENNIFER GROGAN · Day Staff Writer
Photos by SEAN D. ELLIOT · Day Staff Photographer

ONCE A CREW MEMBER HAD REMOVED THE solar panel from the top of the 32-foot-tall buoy, the commanding officer of the U.S. Coast Guard cutter Juniper knew immediately why its light was extinguished.

The radio call from the deck of the buoy tender confirmed Lt. Cmdr. Rick Wester's suspicions — "Heavy guano, sir; it's heavy guano."

During the day, the solar panel charges the batteries that power the light in the buoy at night. No more than 10 percent of the panel can be obstructed without causing a problem. This panel was about 60 percent covered.

"A bird, or several birds, crapped all over the panel and killed the batteries," Wester said. "That's why we're here."

The Juniper (WLB-201) was in Block Island Sound and Long Island Sound Thursday to replace old-fashioned lights with modern light-emitting-diode lanterns. This was Cerberus Shoal Lighted Gong Buoy 9, located 6 miles southeast of The Race.

Coast Guard technicians on the Juniper removed the old lighting setup and installed an LED lantern from Carmanah Technologies Corp., a Canadian company. Common buoy problems include burned-out or malfunctioning light bulbs, dead batteries and torn-off or obstructed solar panels.

The LEDs are self-contained and durable. Because there are four vertical solar panels on the sides, there is less of a chance they will become obstructed.

Buoys are navigational aids that tell mariners where to go and where not to go, serving as a visual reference to confirm the data from a boat's satellite or radio system. The buoy's color depends on what function it serves.

The Juniper, homeported at Naval Station Newport in

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Iran, U.S. to sit at regional Iraq talks

Rice would not rule out direct meeting with 2 parties

By KIRK SEMPLE
New York Times News Service

Baghdad, Iraq — The government of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran announced Sunday that it would attend a regional conference on Iraq later this week, setting the stage for the first Cabinet-level meeting between Iran and the United States since the end of 2004.

The American envoy to the meeting, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, said that she would not rule out the possibility of conferring directly with Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki, but that she did not foresee any discussions on one of the most divisive issues between the two, Iran's nuclear program.

In a series of television interviews on Sunday, she emphasized that the conference was intended to focus on what Iraq's neighbors and "interested parties" could do to help quell the relentless violence in Iraq.

"This is not a meeting about the United States and Iran," she said on the ABC News program "This Week." "This is a meeting about Iraq and about what Iraq's neighbors and interested parties can do to help stabilize the situation in Iraq."

She then ticked off a list of actions Washington would seek from Tehran in what was effectively a repetition of the accusations that have helped sour relations, including stirring sectarian violence in Iraq and providing Shiite militias with sophisticated weaponry to use in roadside bombs, known as improvised explosive devices.

"Stop the flow of arms to foreign fighters," she said. "Stop the flow of foreign fighters across the borders. Stop using advanced IED technology to kill American soldiers. Stop stir-



Condoleezza Rice

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Doctors exploring natural avenues to scar-free surgery

By MALCOLM RITTER
AP Science Writer

Pittsburgh — A 4-year-old boy lay on an operating table here a few weeks ago with a tumor that had eaten into his brain and the base of his skull. Standard surgery would involve cutting open his face, leaving an ugly scar and hindering his facial growth as he matured.

But doctors at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center knew a way to avoid those devastating consequences. They removed much of the tumor through the boy's nose.

Since then, doctors in New York and in France have announced they removed gall bladders through the vaginas of two women. And doctors in India say they have performed appendectomies through the mouth.

It's a startling concept and a little unpleasant to contemplate. But researchers are exploring new ways to do surgery using slender instruments through the body's natural openings, avoiding cutting through the skin and muscle.

Many questions remain about that approach. But doctors say it holds the promise of providing a faster recovery with less pain and no visible scars. And in the brain, it can avoid a need for manipulating tissue that could disturb brain and eye function.

For abdominal surgeries, going through the mouth, vagina or rectum would avoid the need to cut through sensitive tissues. And deep inside the body, where tissue doesn't feel lasting pain, the procedures themselves might be less traumatic.

Some abdominal surgeries like bowel operations can require patients to spend a week or more recovering at home. With the natural-opening surgery, the theoretical hope is that

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Militiamen loyal to a powerful Shiite cleric might be emerging from two months of self-imposed dormancy in Iraq. **A2**



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Forget about jogging for health; schools around the country are deploying a video game that has students dancing up a sweat. **A4**

WEATHER

No Serious Rain In Sight
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