



BIG BLUE: Oceanographer Sobahle Somhlaba prepares for a research stint onboard the Norwegian research vessel Dr Fridtjof Nansen along Africa's east coast. Somhlaba is one of two South Africans taking part in the project. *Picture: DAYLIN PAUL*

Ambitious research venture awaits SA oceanographers

TOM POWELL

A DEMANDING week at sea lies in wait for two South African oceanographers set to join an ambitious research venture surveying some of the world's least studied ocean regions along Africa's east coast.

Sobahle Somhlaba, 32, and Tendani Mariba, 33, next week

participate in the Agulhas and Somali Current Large Marine Ecosystems project to find solutions to the environmental threats to countries situated along the western Indian Ocean.

Said Somhlaba: "My job is to understand the properties of the water. Although I'm only participating in one leg, I'm hoping to do more.

"I'm very excited about see-

ing new places and studying new areas, but I'll be seasick for the first three days. I'm going to miss home, being on land and especially my wife, daughter and six brothers."

On Monday, the team boards the Norwegian research vessel, Dr Fridtjof Nansen, as it leaves Cape Town for Maputo where it will begin the first leg of the voyage, venturing off

the coasts of Madagascar and Mauritius, studying the Mascarene Plateau and the Mozambique Channel before returning to Maputo in December.

Media consultant Claire Attwood said: "There are problems involving pollution, over fishing and degradation of the marine environment and we need to find strategies to solve these problems."