



At the beginning of the last (half) week, we headed again towards the shelf break southeast of Sri Lanka to continue with our measurements. Since we reached these waters already around noon, it was again a great opportunity for our marine mammal observers to spot pygmy blue whales. Our local marine mammal observer Menake Goonewardena was really happy to get some sightings and photographs.



*Pygmy blue whale starts diving.
(Photograph: Menaka Goonewardena)*

People that were not scheduled for watches were busy with packing all the scientific equipment. After all devices had been dismantled and all parts as well as cables had been packed into boxes, we could finally stow the containers. Also freight lists for the transport back to Germany and Japan had to be prepared. Much time and care had also been taken to the data copying that we keep all the data to start the scientific work in our institutes.

August 15 and 16 we completed our survey grid with the missing northern parts of two N-S profiles. All devices still in operation worked very well. We finished

scientific data acquisition August 16 at 23:00 local time. This allowed us to copy also the very last data before we entered the port. This was important since our local participants and observers wanted to get a complete data set immediately after arrival.

After a short transit from the last scientific profile we reached the pilot station at the entrance to the port of Colombo in the morning of Wednesday around eight o'clock. The sun just had risen above the city. With a slight delay the pilot together with the help of a tug guided us towards the North Pier. At eleven o'clock we finally arrived at the pier. From this pier we had set sail 36 days ago to study the age of the ocean floor south of Sri Lanka.

During our time onboard we gathered important data that will help us to better understand the breakup of India/Sri Lanka from Antarctica. For our Sri Lankan partners the new data is also of high value, since they want to use these data to support their efforts to extend the Exclusive Economic Zone of Sri Lanka.



After stowing containers close to the equator there is no need to go to sauna. (Photograph: Konrad Behnke)

After we had docked to the pier and all scientific equipment, 5 containers and the big streamer winch, was taken from board, there was one measurement left on the schedule. To tie the gravity measurements with the sea gravimeter to the global survey grid, it was necessary to measure the gravity of the Earth beside the vessel and at known localities in Colombo using a mobile gravimeter. The question was if we would get the permission to leave the port territory in time. Two colleagues from the Geological Survey (GSMB) and the National Ocean Affairs Committee

(NOAC) had to wait for some time at the vessel, until Ralf Krockner and Konrad Behnke finally got the GO out from the harbour. Long time after sun set also this last scientific measurement of cruise leg 258/2 was successfully finished.



*Arrival to Colombo.
(Photograph: Wolfram Geissler)*



*Arrival to the homeport of our Sri Lankan participants.
(Photograph: Wolfram Geissler)*

During the last almost six week we, crew and scientific party, lived and worked together. New friendships were made that hopefully will kept also for the future. Not only our students could learn for the life during the expedition. Personally, I enjoyed sailing on RV SONNE, not only because we gathered a lot of very good data, but also because of the friendly atmosphere among all people on board.



*RV "SONNE" at the North Pier in Colombo.
(Photograph: Wolfram Geissler)*

I am very grateful to master Oliver Meyer, to chief of the engine Dieter Hermesmeier and to all the crew of RV SONNE. Many thanks also go to Tabea Altenbernd, Ralf Krockner, Norbert Lensch, Conrad Kopsch and all scientific crewmembers for their great support on this expedition.

With best regards from Colombo
Wolfram Geissler

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The expedition is not yet completely finished, although we arrived to port already one day ago. Today there was a scientific post-cruise meeting at the Foreign Affairs Ministry. Also RV SONNE got a visit by the employees of the German Embassy. Tomorrow morning students of the universities Peradeniya and Ruhuna will get a tour on the vessel. Saturday night, the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany in Sri Lanka H. E. Jörn Rohde invites for a cocktail reception onboard RV SONNE.