



HMS CHATHAM



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HMS CHATHAM CLEARS THE WAY

HMS CHATHAM has brought welcome relief to the community of the east-coast town of Batticaloa in Sri Lanka. Members of her ship's company successfully surveyed and marked a safe passage across a sand bar - dislodged by the force of the tsunami - allowing local fishermen to put to sea for the first time. The Lynx helicopters and ground reconnaissance parties have also helped establish the situation in and around Trincomalee. The Commanding Officer, Captain Steve Chick, met with local representatives and other aid agencies ashore to assess the humanitarian support his ship can offer. A number of tasks have been identified and work will commence at the earliest opportunity.

Captain Chick said:

"We have conducted some useful reconnaissance along the coastal areas over the last few days, but a great deal of the damage requires civil engineers and is beyond the capabilities of my ship. However, the damage reports have been fed into the Sri Lankan coordination cell, in itself a worthwhile task. By identifying and marking a safe route out for local fishing boats, we have enabled more of them to return to sea and their normal life. I hope tomorrow (7 January) we can do more to assist this badly hit local community."

RFA DILIGENCE will soon arrive on station with a heavy-lift capability and a team of naval engineers who will be able to carry out larger scale repairs to local boats and the infrastructure.

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