



HMS CHATHAM



NEWS RELEASE 07/05

HMS CHATHAM WORKING WITH LOCAL AID AGENCIES IN BATTICALOA AREA

HMS CHATHAM remains in company with RFA DILIGENCE. Over the last two days, CHATHAM's main effort has remained in the remote town of Kallar, where the ship has had a team of over forty sailors ashore helping to refurbish a local school. Over twenty classrooms were cleared of debris and the furniture cleaned and put back. Rubble and debris was also cleared from the school grounds, with the team leader negotiating the use of bulldozer the following day to assist in this task. Working with the local environmental health officer, the team began to clean and pump out four wells at the school but this is seen as being a longer term task with the advice being to pump out once a day over several days.

Today (14th Jan) a large working party was again landed, with some continuing to work at the school. Another party were hoping to assist the Sri Lankan authorities construct a bridge to span the damaged causeway; however, the crane did not turn up and this has been re-planned for tomorrow. This will be a significant boost to the community and allow them, and aid, much easier access to the town.

A further team has been landed to the remote village of Kalmadu, 15 miles north of Batticaloa and over 30 miles from the ship; the team cleared some of the local houses and have arranged to assist an aid agency establish a tented village in this isolated area.

The ship also hosted the British High Commissioner, Steven Evans, a team of Sri Lankan journalists and a representative from DfID, the Department for International Development. The Commissioner had lunch with the Captain and a tour of the ship, before visiting the village of Kallar and seeing for himself the work that has been done there. They then stayed on the ship overnight.

Captain Steve Chick, the Commanding Officer said: "Today was a quieter day than the last few hectic days. However, we set the ground work in place to complete some important tasks tomorrow. It was an honour to have the High Commissioner onboard and he has been very pleased with the support we have provided."

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