

# LETTER FROM PATTAYA

By Hybrid Harry.

*We always welcome comments and topics to cover in articles such as this. If you neglect to tell us what interests you, we shall continue to indulge in what we fancy might be of interest... We remind our readers to send any such constructive comments to pattayatrader@pattayatrader.com.*

## 2005 & all that

As January's Letter was written way back in early December to meet the Trader's early end of year deadline, please excuse this belated and brief wrap-up of the year. There is not much to say other than it was a year of extremes, particularly on the weather and geophysical fronts. Most commentators have placed the Bay of Bengal Tsunami as a 2005 event, albeit that it happened in late 2004. This is quite logical as this major natural disaster has affected hundreds of thousands of people over the past twelve months and of course, into the future. For the record, a moderate single wave was spotted in Pattaya Bay by jetski operators a full day after the earthquake, making its final way northwards. Given that the nearest earthquake-vulnerable areas are a considerable distance away from Pattaya, it

would seem unlikely that we would ever be subject to such forces that eventuated on the other side of the Thailand-Burma isthmus. However, on the storm front it is a different matter. People forget that some 20 years ago, Pattaya was hit by a freak storm that sank most boats and flooded a lot of the beachside areas. Given that 2005 has been rated as the one of the stormiest years on record, we are lucky to have avoided such. The American hurricanes led by Katrina did huge damage in that part of the world and other 2005 disasters included October's South Asia earthquake, many coal mining disasters in China and numerous man-made events such as terrorist bombings and assassinations. Bird Flu has barely been contained during the year. Observed reaction to these events by government and international agencies has not been good either. The world was incredulous at America's weak response to helping New Orleans and nearer home, getting much needed aid into Sri Lanka after the tsunami for example was thwarted by corruption. Not a good year all in all.

Indeed Pattaya has suffered due to these events. Although we did get the unsought-for benefit of tourists switching away from Phuket, overall tourism has been well down as overseas visitors have regarded this part of the world as being unsafe on several fronts. Like it or not, tourism is one of the country's main industries and will take time to recover. Any more disasters or troubles will affect us all. Still, this did not stop local pyrotechnics from letting-off a seemingly record number of fireworks all through the festive season, culminating with a solid four hours-worth on New Year's Eve. Never have rockets banged so much and so loudly. Maybe it was to disperse the bad

spirits of 2005. On a final note, the road accident toll over the festive season was as bad as ever throughout Thailand. I sincerely hope that you and yours managed to avoid the carnage. Drive carefully through 2006.

## Surfing the Net

On to brighter things. As part of a project to get a local website up and running, I spent a lot of time over the Christmas holidays on line. It is quite amazing what is out there. By just typing Pattaya onto the Google search, no less than almost three million sites come up on the Web. This is reduced to just over a million by restricting the search to Thailand. Top-ranking sponsored sites are mainly for hotel bookings. Also up there is a gay information page and one on Muay Thai boxing. Surprisingly, nightlife hardly appears on the first few pages on non-sponsored entries. There are more and more property-related sites.

One of the first sites to come up is pattaya.com. This is a rather labourious site and there are much more interesting ones to be found by going down the page. For a more specific search, typing in "retirement in Pattaya" for example brings in just 31 hits on a world search. These are further reduced by Google to 13 so as to avoid repeating site listings. Even then, the way the search engine spiders work, you have to work your way through each site to get to real information on the topic searched. For example, there is an early hit for a page from thaivisa.com. This page is part of a forum and is mostly about the benefits of living up in Esarn as against Pattaya. However, by getting back to the home page (just insert [www.thaivisa.com](http://www.thaivisa.com)) and a deal of useful information comes up on visa issues and more.

So, you must be prepared to do some work, ignoring sites in a foreign language and not forget to bookmark interesting sites to return to later. What quickly becomes apparent, is that most sites try to lead you to buying some sort of service, or are simply advertisements for such as hotels and real estate. Sites with interesting content are few and far between. In trying to find such sites, I then tried "living in Pattaya".

