

Tropical Christmas for stranded couple



By BERNARD SEE

NATION

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Seasoned guests: Gray playing with Christmas decorations at the E&O Hotel alongside his parents, Phillip and Jordan. — LIM BENG TATT/The Star

GEORGE TOWN: Despite being stuck in Penang due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Myanmar-based British marine engineer Phillip Prescott and his family are glad that they get to celebrate a tropical Christmas.

His wife Jordan, an international school teacher in Myanmar, even delivered their baby boy Gray Prescott Benson in May.

The couple, who came here in March, has been stranded in the country since the movement control order (MCO) was enforced on March 18.

“We have been in Penang a few times and we love it here. It’s not a problem at all.

“Our plans are now indefinite but we will be returning to Myanmar when the pandemic blows over,” Jordan said.

She said they had wanted to spend Christmas with Phillip’s parents – John and Fay – in Kettering, Northamptonshire, Britain.

“After arriving in Penang in March, the plan was to fly back to Britain with my husband’s parents to celebrate Christmas there.

“But before we could leave, the MCO was enforced.

“Luckily, we won’t be alone as my in-laws are in Penang under the Malaysia My Second Home programme,” Jordan said, adding that she was seven months’ pregnant at that time.

The 30-year-old said they had been dining and having staycations at the Eastern & Oriental Hotel (E&O Hotel) in Farquhar Street regularly.

“Our son, who is now seven months old, loves it there and he keeps us both busy most of the time, so a break at the hotel is a nice distraction,” she said.



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“We’ll be celebrating it remotely online with my two brothers, who are working in Hong Kong and Vietnam, and their families,” the 46-year-old added.

John, a shoemaker, said he and his wife had been in Penang since March and planned to be in the state permanently.

“But we’ll travel back to Britain a few times yearly to visit our two other sons,” he said.

E&O Hotel general manager Alison Fraser said it had been a privilege to serve the hotel’s youngest regular guest.

“His arrival has brought us joy and lifted the spirits of the staff during this sombre time as the world faces extreme challenges caused by the pandemic.

“There are few hotels with such a rich heritage and little Gray is now a part of our story, bringing a bit of magic and laughter when we need it most.

“For that, we thank Gray and his family, and wish everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,” Fraser said.

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