



Couples usher in Year of Tiger with babies born at midnight

Roaring start to Chinese New Year for three couples, two of whom are first-time parents

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Madam Ong Ai Juan, 34, and Mr Shi Zhi Sheng, 39, were getting ready to visit Mr Shi's parents at their house on Monday night for their annual reunion dinner, but their plans had to change when little Ariele Shi decided she wanted to usher in the Chinese New Year instead.

The couple, who both work in finance, were unsure at first if they needed to head to the hospital immediately when Madam Ong started experiencing pain at 5pm.

The first-time parents said: "We didn't know what kind of pain was considered labour contractions, but we thought it was best to go to the hospital just in case."

Madam Ong, who had been looking forward to the reunion dinner to have a sea cucumber dish she had been craving, said that her mother-in-law also advised them to go to the hospital.

"She told me to just go get it checked, and that she would keep

the dish for me so I can have it later," she added.

Madam Ong was then admitted for delivery around 7pm at Thomson Medical Centre.

"Everyone in the delivery suite was very excited; they were talking about whether she would be a baby Ox or a baby Tiger," Mr Shi said.

Baby Ariele, who was initially due to be delivered on Feb 4, made her roaring entrance into the world at the stroke of midnight as Singapore rang in the Year of the Tiger on Tuesday.

The couple, who have been married for 12 years, said that they look forward to bringing their baby girl home to meet their family.

In his annual Chinese New Year message delivered on Sunday, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong had expressed his hope that "marriage and birth numbers will come roaring back in the Year of the Tiger".

There were 38,651 births in Singapore last year, according to provisional official figures, compared with 38,590 births in 2020 and 39,279 in 2019.



Left: Mr Shi Zhi Sheng and Madam Ong Ai Juan celebrated Chinese New Year by welcoming their baby girl Ariele Shi at the stroke of midnight at Thomson Medical Centre. PHOTO: THOMSON MEDICAL CENTRE



Left: Mr Hu Siyu and Ms Jaslyn Ang celebrated the birth of their daughter Heather Hu at midnight at Gleneagles Hospital. Right: Mr Tan Jin Kiat and Ms Rose Nguyen with baby Bryan Tan. Ms Nguyen had hoped that Bryan would not arrive until Feb 2 so he could have "a nice birth date". PHOTOS: GLENEAGLES HOSPITAL, MOUNT ALVERNIA HOSPITAL/FACEBOOK



fort the whole day on Monday, but was hoping that baby Bryan Tan would not come until Feb 2.

"We were hoping for him to be born on Feb 2 so that he would have a nice birth date - 02/02/2022. We didn't expect that he would be born a day earlier on Chinese New Year instead," she said.

The couple were having a reunion dinner with their family when Ms Nguyen's pain started to become worse, and she had to take breaks in between eating.

"Our family was talking to the baby, saying: 'Wait, let Mama eat dinner first, please.' But he wanted to come out to meet us already," she said, laughing.

The couple, who have been married for three years and have a 16-month-old boy, went to the hospital at 9.30pm and Ms Nguyen was admitted soon after.

"The doctor was very excited during the birth, telling me to try and push as best as I can so that Bryan would come out at midnight," Ms Nguyen said.

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Amid the Covid-19 pandemic, PM Lee said birth numbers "have fallen slightly, but not as much as we had feared", and he affirmed the Government's support for those starting families.

Parents will receive a Baby Support Grant of \$3,000 if their newborn's birth or estimated delivery

date is from Oct 1, 2020, to Sept 30 this year.

Also celebrating the new lunar year with their first child was Mr Hu Siyu and Ms Jaslyn Ang, both 27.

The couple welcomed their daughter Heather Hu at Gleneagles Hospital at midnight.

Ms Ang was admitted to the hospital earlier on Monday and started having contractions at 6pm.

Over at Mount Alvernia Hospital, a baby boy was born at 12.03am on Tuesday to Mr Tan Jin Kiat, 47, and Ms Rose Nguyen, 27.

Ms Nguyen said that she had experienced slight pain and discom-