

## Woman delivers baby in back seat while cabby races to hospital



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**By David Sun**

SINGAPORE - The cabby was speeding on the Tampines Expressway (TPE) with his high beam and hazard lights on.

His passengers, technician Muhammad Fauzi Yusof and his wife, Madam Siti Rozianah Amat, both 26, were desperately trying to reach Parkway East Hospital.

Madam Rozianah was about to give birth to their third child, a girl.

But 10 minutes into the journey, cabby Chua Eng Soon, 53, heard a baby crying from the back seat of his taxi.

The drama began when the ComfortDelGro cabby of 18 years went to Montreal Link in Sembawang on Monday at 7.45am to answer a call booking.

When no one showed up after five minutes, he called Mr Fauzi, who told him: "My wife is in labour. Can you come up and help with the bags?"

When he went up to their sixth-storey flat, he saw Madam Rozianah lying on the sofa.

"From her expression and breathing, she looked like she was about to give birth at any time," he said.

"She wasn't screaming, but it was obvious from the pain on her face."

Madam Rozianah said she was in great pain but kept quiet so as to not disturb the neighbours.

Mr Chua told Mr Fauzi to call for an ambulance.

Mr Fauzi said: "Based on our previous experience, I thought there would be enough time to get her to the hospital. But I guess her birth was meant to be special."

Mr Chua added: "I actually told them we should go to Khoo Teck Puat Hospital as it was the closest.

"But they had arranged for the child to be delivered at Parkway East Hospital (at Telok Kurau Road), so I took them."

Mr Fauzi said the baby, who weighed only 2.35kg, was not due until later next month. The couple have

two sons, aged three and two.

Mr Chua said: "I tried to get to the hospital as fast as I could, but I also had to drive safely.

"I don't know how fast I was driving because all my focus was on the road."

Mr Fauzi said he was relatively calm and kept telling his wife to maintain her breathing rhythm. She lay on the back seat while he squatted in the narrow leg space on the floor.

Halfway through the journey, she told him that the baby was about to come out.

Mr Fauzi said: "I was like, really? Then I saw the baby's hair and phoned our doctor to ask if I could do the delivery.

"He said okay, do what needs to be done."

He then told his wife to push.

Madam Rozianah said she grabbed the seat belt tightly during the delivery, which took her only one push.

"My husband was like, 'one, two, three, push', and she was out. She came super fast."

And that was baby Naira Inara's entrance into the world.

Madam Rozianah said: "We thought there would be ample time to make it to the hospital. Fortunately, Mr Chua got us to the hospital as quickly and as safely as possible and we are thankful for that."

Mr Fauzi said he was worried because of the absence of medical professionals and equipment. There are risks involved when a baby is delivered without medical help, say doctors.

"I was worried they wouldn't make it and about the possible complications," he added.

Madam Rozianah said: "It was very painful and I was sweating. But my husband assured me it would all be all right, and I'm thankful for and proud of him."

She added that the delivery was more painful than her previous ones, but it was "all worth it for my healthy princess".

## **ANXIOUS BUT HAPPY**

Said Mr Chua: "When I heard her cries, I was anxious but so happy."

When the taxi arrived at the hospital's entrance, a doctor and five nurses were waiting for them.

Mr Fauzi said: "The doctor joked that I could take over his job."

He said the hospital staff told them to put the registration number of Mr Chua's taxi as Naira's birthplace on her birth certificate.

Mother and child were discharged on Tuesday.

Madam Rozianah said her friends told her to name the baby "Taxiah" because she was born in a taxi, but she decided against it.

The couple said they were thankful to Mr Chua for driving safely while rushing to get them to the hospital.

Mr Chua said: "My wife later told me I saved a life, but I said that I simply welcomed a new one into this world."

On Thursday, he visited the couple at Mr Fauzi's mother's flat and gave them a red packet for good luck.

He also got to carry Naira for the first time.

He said: "I have taken pregnant women to the hospital before, but she is the first one to give birth in my taxi. I am happy for the family."

Mr Chua will receive ComfortDelGro's Crystal Award and a cash incentive, which are given in

recognition of cab drivers who have done extraordinary deeds.

ComfortDelGro's group corporate communications officer, Ms Tammy Tan, said seven babies have been born in its taxis over the past decade, with the last one in July last year.

### **Giving birth without medical help**

Births in places like taxis are rare and often come with risks, two gynaecologists told The New Paper.

Dr Arthur Tseng, an obstetrician and gynaecologist, said the couple were lucky that all the factors were in their favour.

"If a baby were to be successfully delivered outside of the hospital, the mother would have had to have a low-risk pregnancy, with all factors that might sabotage a normal delivery absent," he said.

"They are rather rare, as most parents-to-be are well prepared to come to the hospital when the wife is in labour."

He added that it would also have been riskier as the baby was borderline pre-term, which could have led to complications.

Dr Wee Horng Yen, an obstetrician and gynaecologist of 15 years, said there is no official local data on such incidents.

Also noting that complications could arise, the senior consultant at O & G Care Clinic, said: "The baby may not breathe spontaneously. Should this occur, the baby will be deprived of oxygen, causing brain damage.

"As the delivery environment is not clean, there is increased risk of infection."

Dr Wee also said that when the baby is being delivered, the nerves around the baby's arm could be injured if the wrong technique is used.

He advises those having an unplanned delivery to call for an ambulance immediately.

### **Dr Wee's tips for unplanned deliveries:**

If the baby's head can be seen, find a place to lie down or sit in case the baby drops.

Hold off pushing if a medical attendant is nearby.

If the baby has been delivered, dry him with a towel and use another clean towel to keep him warm.

Do not attempt to pull the umbilical cord or cut it.

Stay on the phone with the paramedics to get further advice.

### **Special deliveries**

Mrs Clare Pannell, a 33-year-old British citizen living in Singapore, gave birth to a boy in Mr Tan Check Tueng's cab.

She was on her way to Mount Elizabeth Hospital, and she kept clutching her stomach and urging him to drive faster, Mr Tan said.

The baby was delivered in the taxi by a nurse when they arrived at the hospital as it was too late to get her to the labour ward.

### **MARCH 2011**

Mr Louis Goh, his wife Mrs Kisvian Goh, and his mother Madam Kwa, boarded Mr Chan Hong Chye's taxi in Choa Chu Kang to go to KK Women's and Children's Hospital.

Minutes after the cab pulled out of the carpark, Mrs Goh said she felt that the baby's head was out.

Madam Kwa, 50, who was in the back seat with her, acted as the midwife to deliver the baby.

At about 9.40pm, their son was born while the taxi was on Upper Bukit Timah Road, near Bukit Timah Shopping Centre.

**APRIL 2007**

Madam Tay Yan Yan, 32, boarded Mr Kiang Long Ann's taxi with her mother-in-law, her one-year-old son and their maid at Punggol.

About halfway through the 20-minute journey to Gleneagles Hospital, her amniotic sac broke.

Mr Kiang reassured her, telling her to breathe.

As he turned the corner at Cluny Road, just 20m from the hospital, Madam Tay gave birth to a boy.



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