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Philippines welcomes symbolic '7 billionth baby'

MANILA: The Philippines welcomed one of the world's symbolic "seven billionth" babies yesterday, after she arrived to a celebratory cheer at a packed government-run hospital.

Weighing 2.5 kilos (5.5 pounds), Danica May Camacho was delivered just before midnight Sunday amid an explosion of camera flashes in the delivery room at Manila's Jose Fabella Memorial Hospital.

"She looks so lovely," the mother, Camille Dalura, whispered softly as she cradled her tiny baby.

"I can't believe she is the world's seventh billion."

The baby is the second child for Dalura and her partner, Florante Camacho, who quietly stood in a corner wearing a white hospital gown as television crews and photographers crowded to get a shot of his daughter.

The parents and the baby were met by top United Nations officials in the Philippines, who presented the child with a cake.

There were also gifts from local benefactors including a scholarship grant for the child's study, and a livelihood package to enable the parents to start a general store.

Also on hand to witness the event was 12-year-old Lorrize Mae Guevarra, who the Philippines declared as its own symbolic six billionth baby in 1999 when the world reached that demographic landmark.

"I am very happy to see this cute baby. I hope like me she will grow up to become healthy and well loved by everyone," said Guevarra, who is now in the sixth grade.

The United Nations named a Bosnian baby, Adnan Mevic, as the Earth's six billionth inhabitant on October 12, 1999. The secretary general at the time, Kofi Annan, was pictured in a Sarajevo hospital with Mevic in his arms.

The Mevic family is now struggling in poverty at their Sarajevo home, which is partly why no baby will be put in the global spotlight this time.

Danica May Camacho is one of several children in countries around the world being declared a symbolic seven billionth human.

It was hoped she would arrive at exactly midnight,

but she was delivered two minutes early.

Health Secretary Enrique Ona said the arrival of the world's seven billionth baby also presented the Philippines with an opportunity to assess population related issues.

According to the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) State of the World Population Report, the Philippines is the 12th most populous country in the world with 94.9 million people.

China continues to have the biggest share of the population at 1.35 billion, followed by India at 1.24 billion.

The report noted that in many parts of the developing world, where population growth outpaces economic growth, reproductive health care remains a crucial issue.

UNFPA representative Ugochi Daniels said that while the Philippine population remains young, with people under 25 making up 54 per cent of the total, they needed to be taught proper "life skills" and about sexual issues.

She said that while women were having fewer children globally, the overall population continued to increase.

"While our world of seven billion represents a complex picture of trends and paradoxes, there are some essential global truths we observe," she said.

"Conversely, there is no one global population outlook."

The UNFPA said 10 percent of girls in the Philippines aged 15 to 19 have started child bearing, with many of the young also increasingly vulnerable to HIV. - AFP



Filipina mother Camille kisses her newly born baby girl named Danic Camacho, the Philippines' symbolic seventh billionth baby, as part of the United Nation's seven billion global population in Fabella Maternity hospital in Manila.