

STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEN

York Regional Police sealed a Markham home yesterday to investigate the murder of two children.

Family 'seemed normal': neighbour

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called police around 7 p.m. Thursday.

The girls' grandparents were also home at the time, but were unaware of the tragedy as it unfolded, police said.

The two children, who appeared to have drowned, were rushed to Markham Stouffville Hospital where they were pronounced dead.

Post mortem examinations to determine the exact cause of death were being performed Friday.

The girls' mother was admitted to hospital and was immediately placed in critical care.

Her condition was upgraded to serious Friday and a police guard was placed outside her room.

The girls' father was running errands at the time of the murders and returned home to find police and other emergency vehicles in his driveway.

It appears as though the family, of Sri Lankan descent, has been in Canada since at least 1990, although police are conducting background checks as a part of the investigation.

They had moved into their Sophia Avenue home just months before Thursday's incident, neighbours said.

"They seemed normal," said next door neighbour Theresa Pacariem. "Just like any other family."

Shock was the most common reaction in the neighbourhood to news of the apparent double murder and attempted suicide.

"It's terrible," neighbour Surendra Joshi said. "Normally this is a nice quiet place."

Police are asking anyone with information to contact investigators at 1-866-876-5423 ext. 7865, by e-mail at homicide@police.york.on.ca, Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS, or leave an anonymous tip online at www.crimestoppersyr.ca

Sprawl harms health: panellist

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ted to account for 100 per cent of Canada's net labour growth by 2011.

"People will still want single detached homes. It's not about saying you will take transit or you will live in a 1,000-square-foot condo, it is about giving residents a choice," Mr. Fisch said.

The impact growth may have on health was one of the ideas presented at the seminar.

"What are we fighting for? We are fighting for quality of life," Rahul K. Bhardwaj, CEO for the United Way of York Region said. "You can't talk about urban sprawl without talking about health."

Mr. Bhardwaj pointed to the health effects of spending more time in your car commuting, telling the forum each hour per day spent in a car increases the likelihood of becoming obese by 6 per cent.

"Cars are killing people in ways we didn't realize before," Mr. Bhardwaj said.

Congestion doesn't only have long-term health implications, it can also lead to less time spent giving back to your community, he pointed out.

"Ten additional minutes of commuting per day cuts community involvement in community affairs by 10 per cent," Mr. Bhardwaj said.

Among the most dramatic changes expected in York Region over the next two decades will be demographics.

Between 1996 and 2001, more than 445,000 immigrants settled in the GTA.

Friday's forum is one of many public consultations happening this month where regional officials will be seeking input on how York Region's communities should look in the next 25 years.

The region is hosting a series of open houses on sustainable growth. Visit region.york.on.ca

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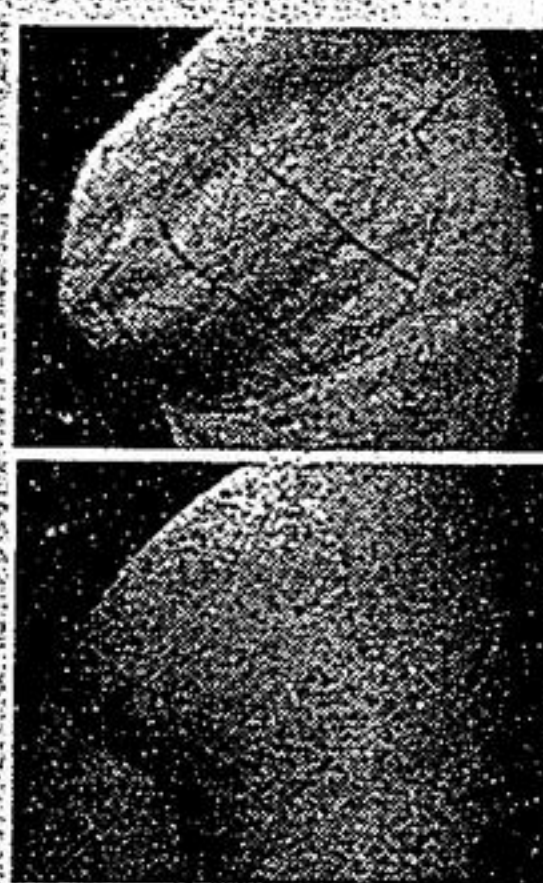


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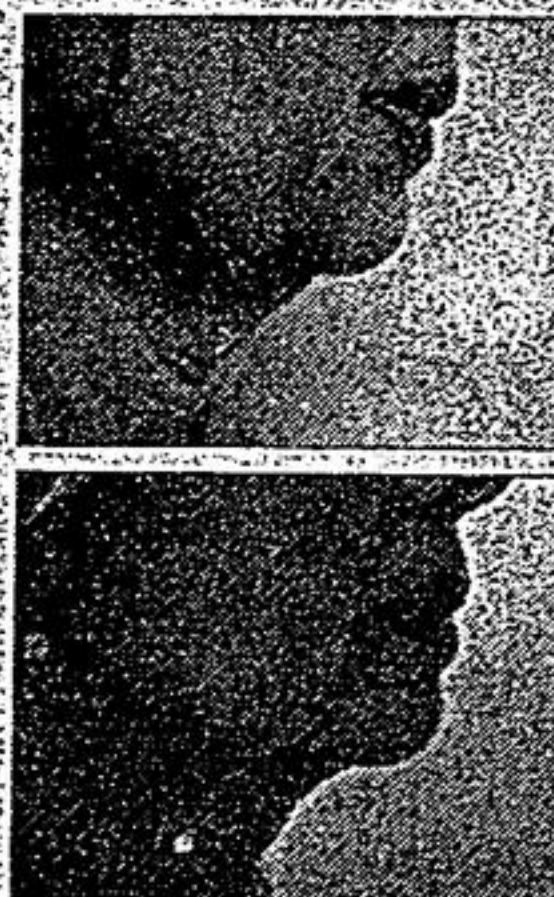
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