Swapped Murugan idol of 1,000-year-old Thogaimalai temple recovered and reinstalled

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News

At the roughly 1,000-year-old Meenakshi Sundareswarar – Balathandayuthapani temple at Thogaimalai near Kulithalai, Karur district (under the HR&CE Department), the main Balathandayuthapani (Murugan) idol was found to have been swapped after the 27 Nov 2025 consecration. Inquiries by HR&CE and the idol-theft prevention wing police found that a priest had replaced it. The old idol was recovered from a nearby spring (20 Jan) and the priest was arrested. On the orders of the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court, the old idol was reinstalled on 12 Oct 2026.

Key facts

Temple	Meenakshi Sundareswarar – Balathandayuthapani temple, Thogaimalai (near Kulithalai), Karur district – about 1,000 years old
Incident	Main idol found swapped after the 27 Nov 2025 consecration
Recovery	Recovered from a nearby spring (20 Jan); priest arrested
Reinstalled	12 Oct 2026 – on the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court's order
Note	The report does not give the idol's metal or age; '1,000 years' refers to the temple

Background

- The Idol Wing CID of the Tamil Nadu Police dates from 1983. A notable return: the Sripuranthan Nataraja from Ariyalur, handed back by Australia in 2014.
- Laws: Antiquities and Art Treasures Act 1972; Tamil Nadu Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Act 1959. The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court began in 2004.
- Murugan's six abodes (Arupadai Veedu): Thiruparankundram, Thiruchendur (the seashore temple), Palani, Swamimalai, Thiruthani, Pazhamudircholai. At Palani, Murugan is worshipped as 'Dhandayuthapani'.

Tamil Nadu link: Tamil Nadu's temples are administered by the HR&CE Department. Kulithalai lies on the Cauvery in Karur district.

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