

Sripuranthan awaits its Nataraja

News of the stolen idol's imminent return draws cheer

A. Srivathsan

CHENNAI: The news of the imminent return of the 1,000-year-old Nataraja idol that had been stolen from the village temple spread delight among the residents of Sripuranthan near Ariyalur in Tamil Nadu on Tuesday.

"We are extremely happy to hear about the news of the idol being brought back after several years," said R. Ulaganathan, a native of Sripuranthan.

The entire village and its

surroundings will be immensely happy once the idol is installed in the same temple and rituals performed, he added.

S.S. Jei Suda, who is also from Sripuranthan and is the chairman of the T. Palur Panchayat Union, said everyone in the village was eager to see the idol.

The Idol Wing CID of the Tamil Nadu Police, which had investigated the case and provided convincing evidence, was equally elated. Prateep V. Philip, ADGP

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of the Idol Wing CID, told *The Hindu*: "We are happy the Australian authorities have responded to our letter rogatory and are in an active stage of considering the early return of the idols."

Acknowledging the efforts of the Idol wing CID and appreciating the

prompt action by the Australian government, Dr. R. Nagaswamy, renowned scholar of Chola sculptures, said the restitution of the Nataraja idol would set a strong precedent and enable the return of stolen artefacts from other countries also. Follow-up by the Australian government "has pleased many hearts in India and brought the two countries closer."

(With additional reporting by R. Rajaram in Tiruchi)