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TOP STORIES

Amma, India's 'hugging saint', to visit US



By IANS
Tuesday May 22, 11:23 AM

New York, May 22 (IANS) Indian spiritual guru Mata Amritanandamayi, who blesses her followers with a warm and tender embrace, is to begin touring the US May 31 - and about 100,000 people are expected to descend on her California centre. Amritanandamayi, better known as 'Amma' or 'Ammachi', is set to visit 10 American cities. The Mata Amritanandamayi Center, Bay Area, California, has organised the US tour.

Amma, 53, travels extensively to reach out to people. She has launched several charitable activities to help the needy and set up educational institutions for the underprivileged, the organisers said.

Her followers in the US have launched 'Mother's Kitchen', a soup kitchen project for the poor in 30 American cities. Local volunteers prepare and serve meals to hundreds of people every week at these centres.

Born the daughter of a poor fisherman in Kerala, Amma began to attract crowds even as a young mystic. International recognition followed.

Her signature 'darshan', or blessing with an embrace, has followers queuing up in large numbers. Known as the 'hugging saint of India', Amma has been doing this, as a natural expression of love, since she was a teenager.

In 1993, she was selected president of the Centenary Parliament of World Religions. In 2000, she addressed the UN Millennium World Peace Summit and was conferred the James Parks Morton Award in 2006, particularly for her disaster relief work.

She begins her tour with Seattle (May 31), goes on to San Francisco Bay Area (June 5-15), Los Angeles (June 17-21), Albuquerque (June 23-27), Dallas (June 29-30), Iowa (July 2-3), Chicago (July 5-6), Washington, DC (July 8-9), New York City (July 11-13) and Boston (July 15-18). From Boston she moves to Toronto.

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