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Kerala's 'hugging saint' celebrates 56th birthday

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Sunday 27th September, 2009 (IANS)

The 56th birthday of Mata Amritanandamayi Devi, popularly known as the hugging saint, was celebrated by thousands of her devotees at her ashram near here Sunday.

The day began with special prayers at a specially erected tent followed by Mata Amritanandamayi's annual address.

She said there are two important days in life. 'The first is the day we are born. The second is the day we realise why we were born.

'But for many people this second day never comes. They live mechanically from the day they are born to the day they die. We will only be able to appreciate the beauty and magnitude of life when we realise its true purpose,' said Amma, as she is known among devotees.

She also spoke on the dangers of drugs and alcohol and a large number of devotees took a formal pledge before her to spread awareness in this regard.

On this occasion, 32 sewing machines were donated to women to form the Amrita Self-Help Group in Wayanad.

Then there was the customary mass marriage function conducted by Amma for poor couples and the ashram bore all expenses.

The function also saw several new publications dedicated to Amma being released.

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