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## Mata all set to house flood-hit

PK Surendran / DNA

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**Bangalore:** Mata Amritanandamayi, a spiritual guru with a vast global following, is ready with the first lot of 100 houses constructed for flood-victims in Raichur district of Karnataka.



Mata will hand over the keys to chief minister BS Yeddyurappa at the Mata Amritanandamayi Mutt on Tuesday, mutt authorities said. The mutt had offered to build 2,000 houses in Raichur district as part of its rehabilitation programme for those affected by the floods that hit the state in September/October last year. It had signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the state government in this regard.

Each house measures about 200 square feet and have been built at a cost of Rs1.45 lakh each. Each house has a kitchen, a bathroom, a bedroom and a living area.

The mutt had earmarked about Rs50 crore for rehabilitation programmes for flood victims in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Swamis of the mutt told DNA that the construction work of the remaining houses was in an advanced stage.

Mata, who arrived in Bangalore on Monday, will meet her devotees after handing over the keys of the completed houses to the chief minister.

Her Bangalore visit is part of her 45-day India tour to give spiritual solace to millions of her admirers, including Yeddyurappa.

Mata, who is also popularly known as the 'hugging saint', had established around 66 schools, 18 temples and a super-specialty hospital in Kochi through the mutt. The mutt establishment feeds thousands from its kitchens, including the Mother's Kitchen located in many centres in the US. It was also providing pensions every year to over 50,000 widows. Till date, it had built 45,000 houses for victims of natural calamities. More importantly, her revolutionary step of appointing women priests to some of the temples built by her mutt has been hailed as the biggest empowerment of women in modern times.

The mutt was established in Kollam in 1981, and today it has centres across 33 countries. Even well-known atheist, Union defence minister AK Antony, had publicly acknowledged that he finds peace of mind at the ashram. This statement had earned him the wrath of many in and out of the Kerala Assembly more than once.

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