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## Amritavarsham 60' to begin on Wednesday

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Former President A P J Abdul Kalam, Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi, Uttarakhand Chief Minister Vijay Bahuguna and Kerala Chief Minister Oommen Chandy will be among the dignitaries attending the 60th birthday celebrations of spiritual leader Mata Amritanandamayi in Amritapuri near Kollam from September 25 to 27.

The celebrations will be heralded by a three-day prayer for world peace set to commence on Sunday.

A statement from the Mata Amritanandamayi Math said that around five lakh people were expected to attend the celebrations, titled 'Amritavarsham 60'. Math's board of trustees vice-chairman Amritaswarupananda Puri said on Saturday that the core part of the celebrations would span for three days, starting September 25.

The celebrations will witness the presence and performances of world-renowned experts from several fields of excellence, besides political figures and performing artistes from across the country and abroad.

On September 25 and 26, an international summit, titled 'Our Villages, Our World: What Can We Offer?', will be held on Amritapuri campus of Amrita University.

The inaugural function will include addresses by A P J Kalam, eminent scientist M S Swaminathan and Nobel laureate Leland H Hartwell. Many other renowned scholars, senior government officials, business leaders, environmentalists, scientists and educationalists will be present.

"The concept is to use the ideas generated by the summit and implement them in our 101 village adoption programme," the swami said.

"On September 26, Modi will unveil a number of new scientific inventions and prototypes by Amrita University that we are offering to society. These include a wireless ECG-monitoring system called 'Amrita Spandanam' and a personal safety alert system, that has more than 15 features, for women in distress," he said.

The main project to be unveiled this year is a programme to adopt 101 villages across the country, with the intention of making them self-reliant role-model villages, the swami said, stating that this would be launched on September 27.

On the evening of the same day, Oommen Chandy will inaugurate a set of new charitable ventures of Mata's ashram. On the concluding day, the notable participants include Governors K Sankaranarayanan (Maharashtra), B L Joshi (Uttar Pradesh), K Rosaiah (Tamil Nadu) and Aziz Qureshi (Uttarakhand). Among other dignitaries on September 27 are Union Ministers Vayalar Ravi, Oscar Fernandes and Harish Rawat. The Guru Padapuja and Mata's birthday address will be held on September 27. Devotees will have the opportunity to hear her sing bhajans and have her darshan. Other announcements and unveilings by the Math include exciting developments in cancer research by the Amrita Centre for Nanosciences and Molecular Medicine, a new tablet-based learning programme called Amrita RITE and a clutch of exciting online innovations for the benefit and protection of society, the swami said. Renowned artistes from across the world will perform on all three days, starting from afternoon and lasting past midnight.

They include Hindustani flautist Hariprasad Chaurasia, Carnatic mridangist Umayalapuram Sivaraman, classical vocalist Ajoy Chakrabarty, dancers Shobana and Manju Warriar, drummer A Sivamani, Stephen Devassy and group, Karaikudi Mani and team, sitarist Nayan Ghosh, Odissi dancer couple Sujata and Ratikant Mohapatra, Baul music by Parvathy Baul and African music by Marie Nga. "We also have long-time Amma devotee and famous rock guitarist J Mascis (frontman for American alternative rock band Dinosaur Jr) performing," the swami said.

"We may have more musical surprises from the West that are yet to be announced," he said.

The ceremonies on September 26 will open with panchari melam by a 100-drummer-strong percussion ensemble, led by chenda master Kizhakoottu Aniyar Marar and a bunch of dance performances from across the country, choreographed by Regata Trivandrum.

There will also be a procession of flag-bearers from many nations with devotees of Mata dressed in the traditional costumes of their native countries.