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One treatment plant, two inaugural functions

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The Muttathara sewage treatment plant will have two inaugural functions, one by the Corporation and another by the State government.

Urban Affairs Minister Manjalamkuzhi Ali had, on Tuesday, announced that Chief Minister Oommen Chandy will inaugurate the plant on November 27. But the Corporation authorities seem to have stolen a march on him by announcing their own inaugural function to be presided over by Mayor K. Chandrika on November 25, in protest against the 'one-sided decision making' by the Minister.

In a press conference here on Thursday, the Mayor, flanked by standing committee chairpersons, said the Ministers or representatives of the State government, who never even visited the plant during the construction phase, were now trying to claim credit for it through other means.

‘Dream project’

“The Muttathara plant is a dream project for the Corporation. Right from the initial stage, during the preparation of the City Development Plan in 2006, to the submission of project proposal to the Centre and to the completion of construction activities, it was the Corporation authorities who toiled for this. The present and previous governing bodies called a total of 51 meetings to discuss various phases of its implementation. We also took up the tough task of taking the local people into confidence by formulating a separate project for roads and an anganwadi in the area. No Minister visited the plant. The State government did not take any steps to speed up the construction either,” Ms. Chandrika said.

She said that Mr. Ali never consulted the Corporation before going ahead and announcing the inauguration plans. Some more work had to be finished before the inauguration but the Minister’s announcement had scuttled those plans. The move had undermined the authority and independence of local bodies, she said.

The Corporation authorities had registered their protest at a meeting of the organising committee called by the Minister on

Wednesday. Mr. Ali had said that everyone was invited and that the ruling party at the Corporation could be raising this because Mr. Chandy was inaugurating the function.

However, Mr. Ali came out with a new line of defence on Thursday in which he said that the inauguration was planned on November 27 as the bank guarantee with the private company that had the responsibility of the plant construction was set to expire on that day. Since the agreement was to commission the plant before November 27, he took the decision to inaugurate it on that day to avoid further complications in running the plant. “I had sent an invitation on November 13 to the Mayor, MLAs, and others asking them to participate in the organising committee meeting on November 20. Since similar plants were being planned in Kollam, Kochi, and Kozhikode, it was important that the achievements of this plant received wide publicity,” he said.

Bharatiya Janata Party councillors accused Mr. Ali of planning the function with an eye on the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

Corporation plans function on November 25, two days ahead of the date announced by Manjalamkuzhi Ali.

