

## Shooting coach Thomas gets rousing welcome in Kerala village

The last time Uzhavoor village near here came into the limelight was in 1997 when K.R. Narayanan became the president of India. It once again got an opportunity to celebrate when Sunny Thomas, the country's shooting coach, returned home after Abhinav Bindra won India its first individual Olympic gold medal at Beijing.

Thomas, who has been the national shooting coach since 1993, got a rousing reception Tuesday night at Uzhavoor, also the hometown of former president Narayanan.

Almost the entire village was out to give him a hero's welcome. State Public Works Minister Mons Joseph, former minister K.M. Mani and Lok Sabha member P.C. Thomas were among the politicians who attended the public reception organised by the villagers.

A former professor of English, Thomas' first love has always been shooting. And this village has been keenly awaiting his arrival ever since Bindra got the gold at the Beijing Olympics Aug 11.

Thomas said that he would donate half of the cash reward he got from the government to his village.

'I have received Rs.500,000 from the Kerala government for the gold medal the country won in the Olympics. I will give half of it to the Uzhavoor village council for the upliftment of the weaker sections of society,' he said.

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