



Rahul Saini (left) receiving the Green Globe Yuva award

## Green crusader proves his mettle

PRIYANKA BHADANI

THE ASIAN AGE

✓ The star guests were fitness icon Arnold Schwarzenegger and actor Abhishek Bachchan at the Green Globe Foundation Awards. But the person who won applause for his green feats was 24-year-old Rahul Saini, a Master of Economics student from Punjab University.

Rahul won the "Green Globe for outstanding contribution by Yuva" award. While Rahul has always been interested in protecting the environment, his real work began only after he completed his graduation in Business Administration from Mumbai. He moved to Chandigarh (which is closer to his home in Patiala) to pursue his Masters. "I've been an active debater in college. The logical next step for me was to take debating to court. When I moved to Punjab, I saw no better option than becoming

an RTI activist. Being interested in protecting the environment, I started collecting data and statistics about environment-related issues in Punjab and questioned the state government about the steps being taken to curb these problems," says Rahul.

The real breakthrough for him came when he filed a Public Interest Litigation against the Punjab State Pollution Control Board (PSPCB) last year. The litigation was based on PSPCB's data that the pollution level in Punjab is 400 to 500 times above the permissible limit. "I wanted to know the steps taken to control pollution. The litigation went on for almost a year and in the end we won. The Human Rights Commission accepted all our requests and asked the Board to regularly submit details about the work they do," says Rahul.

In a few months, Rahul will complete his Masters but he says he won't stop his work for the environment.

In fact, he is working with a team in the United States on a machine that would help get rid of the fodder left over after harvesting paddy plants. "To get rid of it, hectares of land in Punjab are burnt. It leads to enormous pollution. This machine would be really helpful," he says.

**I wanted to know about the steps taken to control pollution**

RAHUL SAINI

