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## **3 gram sabhas get awards for conservation**

By Our Special Correspondent

JAIPUR, DEC. 30. Three village communities in the neighbourhood of the Project Tiger Sanctuary at Sariska in Alwar district of Rajasthan have been awarded for their outstanding achievements in the field of conservation. The Ambassador of Sweden, Mr. John Nordenfeldt, who came down to Sariska from New Delhi for the occasion, handed over Rs. 1 lakh each and a memento to the gram sabhas of Bhanota- Kolyara, Hamirpur and Haripura on Friday.

The awards have been instituted by the Alwar-based NGO, Tarun Bharat Sangh (TBS), with the assistance of Winrock International. The ceremony was initially planned in Delhi. However, on the request of the village communities, it was organised in a simple manner in Sariska itself. The gram sabha of Bhanota-Kolyara has received an award for conservation for the second time during the year.

In March this year, the President, Mr. K.R. Narayanan, had visited Hamirpur in the area to confer the Down to Earth-Joseph C John Award on the villages of Bhanota-Kolyara for rejuvenating the Arvari river. The village communities were awarded in recognition of their excellent efforts in the field of water conservation and protection of forest and wildlife over the past 15 years. The work of Hrapura, located in the core area of Sariska Project Tiger, in conserving tiger has been exemplary.

The innovative efforts of the Hamirpur gram sabha in constituting the river basin parliament, Arvari Sansad, has been an example to the whole nation in people's governance of water resources, it is pointed out.

Giving away the awards, Mr. Nordenfeldt complimented the village communities and said his Government and the Swedish agency, SIDA, felt proud of being associated with this work. He called for participation at the people's level which had maximum potential for transformation. A large number of villagers, including women, were present at the function.

Mr.P.K. Rajgarhia, president of the Rural Development Foundation of the PHD Chamber of Commerce, who presided over the function, assured the gathering of a growing sense of social responsibility on the part of industrialists. Mr.Tejevver Singh, Field Director of Sariska, emphasised the joint efforts in conservation and cooperation among the village communities, TBS and the Forest Department for effective management of Sariska.