

Aghanashini estuary may become Karnataka's first Ramsar Site

India has 46 wetlands with Ramsar tag for conservation of wetlands but Karnataka having some of the most important wetlands has lagged behind.



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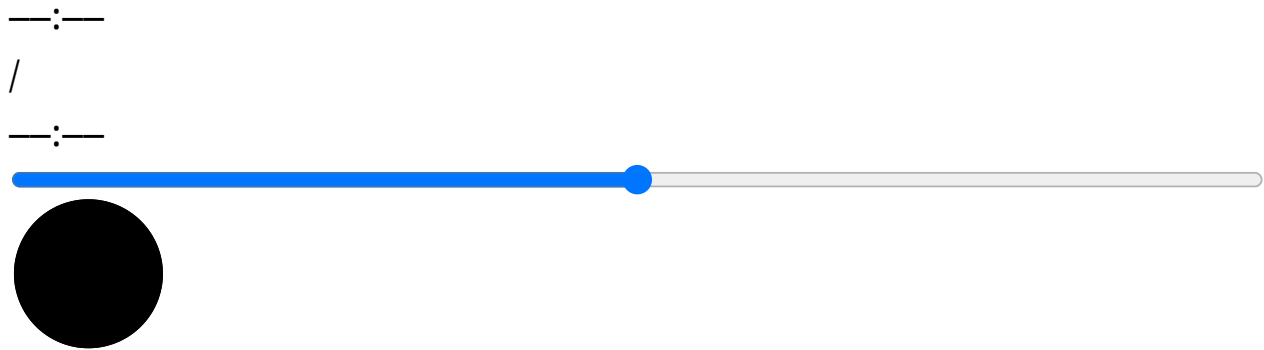
Fishermen head for their daily work from a small fishing port along the Aghanashini river. (Photo | EPS/Ashwin Bhat)

By Amit S Upadhye

Express News Service

HUBBALLI: The Aghanashini river, also known as Tadri river, may become the first wetland in Karnataka to get the prestigious Ramsar Site tag for wetland protection.

India has 46 wetlands with Ramsar tag for conservation of wetlands but Karnataka having some of the most important wetlands has lagged behind.



But now the ENVIS Centre and Energy and Wetlands Research Group from the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) has prepared a detailed report on Aghanashini estuarine region for the submission to the central government. The state government is expected to send the report to the Centre shortly.

The Aghanashini river originates as Bakurhole at Manjuguni near Sirsi in the Western Ghats of Uttara Kannada district. The river meets the tide at Uppinpatana in Kumta taluk, 24 km upstream in the river.

"The Ramsar wetlands status to Aghanashini estuary would aid towards comprehensive management of the estuary, in relation to coastal environmental integrity and protection of dependent biota and people's livelihoods," said T V Ramachandra, from IISc.



A women dives and collects shrimps in Aghanashini estuarine region in

Uttara Kannada District, (Photo | Ashwin Bhat)

"Aghanashini estuary contains representative, rare, or unique example of natural or near-natural wetland type that supports diverse biota including human livelihood, evident from 6500-7000 families' dependence on the ecosystem for natural resources. The total water spread area is 4940 ha which excludes estuarine rice fields and aquaculture farms," he explained.

Aghanashini estuarine region has a unique cultivation of the salt-tolerant rice named Kagga and this has been a major occupation in the estuarine villages for generations. Salt making, water transport, sand and shell mining, mat and basket weaving and boat making are other livelihood options in this wetland region.

"Eco-tourism is emerging as an additional source of livelihood in some of the villages of Aghanashini. The area has recorded over 130 species of birds, 70 species of fishes and several varieties of shrimps . Once Aghanashini Estury get Ramsar tag the next contenders are Ranganatittu bird sanctuary in Mandya and Almatti backwaters in Bagalkote district," added a team memeber from the IISc.

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