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India Reports an Increase In Wild Tiger Population

By **JIM YARDLEY**

NEW DELHI — [India](#) said Monday that it was making progress in saving endangered tigers, with a new nationwide survey estimating a 20 percent increase in their numbers in the wild over the last five years.

The [survey](#), released by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, put India's current tiger population at 1,706, compared with 1,411 in 2006. The new figure is an extrapolation based on photographic evidence in sample sites, along with other indicators.

India is home to about half of the world's wild tigers. Their numbers had declined sharply for decades, largely because of poaching and the pressures of development encroaching on their natural habitat.

"These numbers give us hope for the future of tigers in the world," Jim Leape, the international director of the [World Wildlife Fund](#), said in a statement. "India continues to play an integral role in the tiger's recovery."

Jairam Ramesh, the environment minister, cautioned that the country faced a major challenge in providing enough habitat for tigers to roam wild. He said that the survey also concluded that the amount of land occupied by tigers was shrinking, squeezing their living space.

"There is a decrease in tiger occupancy, which shows that tiger corridors are under biggest threat," Mr. Ramesh said here on Monday at an international conference on tiger conservation, according to Indian news media reports.

The survey comes at a time when private groups and some governments are stepping up efforts to save wild tigers from extinction. In India, where the economy is growing at nearly 9 percent a year, mining, forestry and other types of development are affecting wild habitats.

"There is a need for 9 percent economic growth, and there is no dispute in that, but we

have to reconcile growth with environment,” Mr. Ramesh said. “Choices have to be made.”

A majority of India’s tigers live in the country’s 39 reserves, but the survey found that more than a quarter of them live outside the reserves. The survey was the first to include the [Sundarbans](#), the region of mangrove forests on the border of India and Bangladesh, where 70 tigers were counted.