Iceland plans permanent ban on commercial whaling

A fin whale surfaces in North Atlantic waters near Iceland. Photo: Reuters

REYKJAVIK, Iceland - Iceland's government plans to introduce legislation that would permanently end commercial whaling, a move that would leave Norway and Japan as the only countries continuing the practice.

The bill is expected to be presented to parliament in February 2027 and appears to have substantial political and public support. Iceland's current whaling season ends later this month, with 80 fin whales taken from a quota of 150.

Fin whales are classified as vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. Iceland's last active whaling company received a five-year licence in 2024, but opposition has grown amid animal-welfare concerns and questions about the industry's economic value.

The International Whaling Commission imposed a moratorium on commercial whaling in 1986. Iceland resumed the practice in 2006, while Norway restarted in 1993 and Japan returned to commercial whaling in 2019 after leaving the commission.

The international rules provide separate allowances for Indigenous subsistence hunts where communities depend on whale products for cultural and nutritional reasons. (Reuters)

Iran war tests BRICS unity ahead of New Delhi summit

NEW DELHI, India - India will host BRICS leaders this weekend as conflict involving Iran tests whether the expanded bloc can agree on a common response to one of the world's most serious geopolitical crises.

The September 12-13 summit brings together leaders from Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa and newer members, including Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Ethiopia and Indonesia.

Tensions within the grouping have increased after the UAE severed relations with Tehran following Iranian missile attacks. The dispute could complicate negotiations on a joint declaration, while disruption in the Strait of Hormuz and oil prices above US$100 a barrel add urgency to the discussions.

Chinese President Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian are expected to attend. India is also preparing bilateral talks focused on regional security, trade and economic co-operation.

BRICS representatives gather in New Delhi ahead of the group's leaders' summit. Photo: Reuters

BRICS has sought a larger role for emerging economies in global institutions. Its rapid expansion has increased its influence but also made consensus more difficult as members balance competing regional alliances and interests. (Reuters)

IMF sees three per cent global growth but warns risks remain high

WASHINGTON, United States - The global economy remains on track to grow by about three per cent in 2026, but high energy prices, persistent inflation and mounting public debt continue to threaten the outlook, the International Monetary Fund said on Thursday.

IMF spokesperson Julie Kozack said economies had shown resilience despite six months of conflict in the Middle East and the resulting energy shock. Some governments have drawn on reserves or alternative supplies, but pressure could intensify as winter approaches in the Northern Hemisphere.

The fund said the economy was being pulled in opposing directions. Higher oil and gas prices were adding to inflation, while investment and productivity gains linked to artificial intelligence were supporting demand and activity.

The International Monetary Fund says high energy prices and public debt remain major risks to the world economy. Photo: Reuters

Global public debt is approaching 100 per cent of gross domestic product, close to levels last seen around the Second World War. Developing economies, particularly in Africa, face additional strain from tighter financing conditions and reduced bilateral aid.

The IMF urged central banks to maintain price stability and governments to adopt credible medium-term fiscal plans while protecting essential investment and support for vulnerable households. (Reuters)