

# Japan Pro-Whaling Contingent Vows to Continue Hunts

TOKYO (AP) — Hundreds of pro-whaling Japanese officials, lawmakers and lobby group members have vowed to continue whale hunts despite a world court ruling that halted the country's Antarctic whaling program.

Fisheries Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi told the meeting Tuesday that Japan must protect its whale-eating culture and secure sources of whale meat. Whale meat dishes were served at the gathering near Japan's parliament.

The International Court of Justice ordered Japan on March 31 to stop granting permits for its Antarctic whaling program, which allowed an annual catch of about 1,000 whales. The court rejected Japan's contention that the program was scientific, not commercial.

Japan canceled next season's Antarctic expedition after the ruling but hasn't decided whether to conduct a separate coastal whaling program in the northern Pacific next month.

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