

US House of Representatives Moves to Begin Repealing Obamacare

WASHINGTON - The U.S. House of Representatives voted Friday to take initial steps toward repealing Obamacare, following Thursday's Senate vote on the issue.

House representatives voted 227-198 for a resolution to determine the congressional budget for the 2017 fiscal year and the appropriate budgetary levels for the 2016-2018 fiscal years, allowing the Republicans to adjust budgets for programs under Obamacare, a legislation pushed through in 2010 to expand the coverage of health insurance by the Barack Obama administration. House



Speaker Paul Ryan said the measure passed would launch a "thoughtful, step-by-step process" toward replacing Obamacare. The Republican Party avoided voting directly to repeal Obamacare, which demands a super majority of 60 votes in Senate to pass, but chose to vote on a budget adjustment resolution, which only requires a simple majority. The Senate voted 51-49 Thursday in favor of the resolution. The Republican Party holds 52 seats in the 100-seat Senate and 241 seats in the 435-seat House of Representatives. In both ...*(More on P4)...(15)*

France to Host Meeting on Revival of Israel-Palestine Peace Talks

PARIS - A meeting will be held on Jan. 15 to revive the deadlocked peace process and push Israeli and Palestinian negotiators to resume bilateral talks, French foreign minister Jean-Marc Ayrault said Friday. The United Nations (UN), European Union (EU), United States, and major Arab countries will attend the Paris conference, which "will provide an opportunity to solemnly reaffirm the international community's commitment to the two-state solution...the only way to guarantee lasting peace," Ayrault said. "Participants will reaf-

firm the urgent need to preserve this solution, the viability of which is threatened by continued settlement activity and violence," he added. France launched a Middle East peace initiative last June after inviting 25 foreign ministers to debate ways to breathe life into the stranded peace negotiations. With the upcoming meeting on conflict in the Middle East, the French minister hoped to lay the groundwork for future peace talks involving Israel and Palestine. About 70 ...*(More on P4)...(16)*

May Must Spell out Britain's Position on EU Single Market by Mid-February: Committee

LONDON - Theresa May's government should set out its position on Britain's post-Brexit membership of the European single market by mid-February, a parliamentary committee said in a report Saturday. In its first report, the Exiting the European Union Committee called for transitional arrangements on trade, no return to tariffs for British businesses, and parliamentary vote on final Brexit deal. The report has been published as May is expected to give a major speech next Tuesday to outline her plan for negotiating

Britain's exit from the EU. MPs on the cross-party committee concluded that the government should publish its Brexit plan by mid-February at the latest. This, it said, should set out its position on membership of the single market and the customs union. The report added that government ministers should also seek an outline framework on Britain's future trading relationship with the EU as part of the Article 50 negotiations, including appropriate transitional arrangements, if it is not possible to reach a final agreement by the time when Britain leaves the



EU. The committee also wanted the government to commit to parliament having a vote on the final deal with Brussels. Labour MP Hilary Benn, who chairs the committee, said: "This is going to

be a hugely complex task and the outcome will affect us all. The government needs to publish its Brexit plan by mid-February at the latest, including its position on ...*(More on P4)...(17)*

Britain's Jobless Rate to Rise in 2017, 2018 Because of Brexit: Report

LONDON - Britain's rate of unemployment is forecast to rise over both 2017 and 2018 as a consequence of the country's decision to leave the European Union (EU), according to an Independent Labor Organization (ILO) report published on Friday. Within the area of northern, southern, and western Europe, Britain was the nation which is projected to suffer the highest rise in its unemployment rate in 2017. The ILO forecast in its "World Employment

Social Outlook" report a rise in Britain's jobless rate from an annual rate of 4.8 percent in 2016 to 5 percent in 2017 and 5.3 percent in 2018. The outcome of Britain's vote to leave the EU is likely to undermine investors' and financial markets' confidence in the medium term, both in Britain and elsewhere in Europe, the report noted. Stefan Kuhn, an economist with the ILO, told Xinhua on Friday afternoon: "Unemployment is ...*(More on P4)...(18)*

Trump Says he May Scrap Russia Sanctions

WASHINGTON - President-elect Donald Trump has hinted that he may lift sanctions on Russia and won't stand by the "One China" policy unless Beijing improves its currency and trade practices. Trump told The Wall Street Journal in an interview published Friday that he would keep intact "at least for a period of time" sanctions President Barack Obama's administration imposed on Russia last month over Moscow's alleged cyberattacks to influence the US election. But, if Russia helps the US on key goals such as

fighting violent extremists, Trump suggested he may scrap the punitive measures altogether. He also said he was prepared to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin after taking office January 20. Trump, who sees an opportunity to cooperate with Moscow in fighting jihadist groups like Islamic State, has expressed admiration for Putin, and only reluctantly accepted US intelligence's conclusion that Russian hackers acting on Putin's authority interfered in the US elections. Turning to the longstanding



US practice of not recognizing Taiwan diplomatically, Trump said: "Everything is under negotiation, including One China." Trump has already irked China by accepting a congratulatory phone call from Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-Wen after he won the election, upending decades of diplomatic precedent in which the White House has foregone direct communication with the island's leader. (AFP)

Oil Prices Decline on OPEC Deal Concern

NEW YORK - Oil prices ended lower on Friday on rising concerns over the extent of the OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) member countries implementing the output-cut deal. OPEC reached an agreement in November to cut oil production to curb a global supply glut that has depressed prices for more than two years. Although some countries have promised to implement the deal, there still lacks hard evidence of production reductions.



Investors also worried that the rising U.S. oil supply might offset any reductions, which weighed on the oil prices on Friday. The Energy Information Administration (EIA) said

in its weekly report on Wednesday that U.S. crude oil inventories rose 4.1 million barrels last week to 483.1 million, up 7.1 percent from last year at this ...*(More on P4)...(19)*

Five Migrants Die in Mediterranean, 750 Rescued

ROME - Rescuers saved around 750 migrants from rubber and wooden boats in the central Mediterranean but recovered five dead bodies during the operations, the Italian coastguard said on Saturday. Coastguard and naval ships as well as privately owned fishing and merchant vessels rescued the people from six boats in the central Mediterranean over the last 24 hours, a coastguard spokesman said. He gave no details on the nationalities of those saved or those who died. Last year a record 181,000 boat migrants, mostly from Africa, reached Italy, according to government figures. The majority paid Libyan people traffickers to make the journey. 2016 was also the deadliest year on record for migrants in the Mediterranean, with almost 5,000 deaths, according to the International Organization for Migration. (Reuters)

Iran, Russia, Turkey Hold Talks Ahead of Upcoming Syria Talks

TEHRAN - Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Arab and African Affairs Hossein Jaber Ansari has held meetings with senior Russian and Turkish officials on the resolution of the years-long crisis in Syria. Ansari arrived in the Russian capital Moscow on Friday and first held a meeting with the Russian deputy foreign minister and special presidential envoy for the Middle East and North Africa, Mikhail Bogdanov, to discuss the latest developments on the Syrian crisis and coordinate upcoming peace talks due to be held in the Kazakh capital Astana later this month. "The two diplomats stressed the importance of maintaining close dialogue between Moscow and Tehran on the Syrian crisis and on other current issues of the regional agenda," a statement released by the Russian Foreign Ministry said on Friday. It added that the two officials had also discussed the prospects for the resumption of comprehensive intra-Syrian peace negotiations in Geneva, Switzerland.

The senior Iranian diplomat and Iranian Ambassador to Russia Mehdi Sanaei then took part in a trilateral meeting with Bogdanov and Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister Ahmet Unal Cevikoz to discuss the Astana talks that have been scheduled for January 23 in the wake of a nationwide Syria ceasefire brokered by Russia and Turkey last month. (Presstv)

Iraqi Forces Advance in IS Stronghold, Recapture Mosul University

MOSUL, Iraq - Iraqi government forces on Friday extended grip in the city of Mosul after intense fighting with Islamic State (IS) group, recapturing several buildings of Mosul University, the Iraqi military said. In the eastern front, the commandos of the Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS) stormed in the morning the complex of Mosul University and managed to seize large part of the University complex, including its technical institute and student dormitories, after heavy clashes with IS militants, a statement by the Iraqi Joint Operations Command (JOC) said. The elite CTS forces, backed by U.S.-led ...*(More on P4)...(20)*

Over 25,000 Unaccompanied Child Migrants Reach Italy in 2016: UNICEF

ROME - Some 25,800 unaccompanied minor migrants reached Italy last year, more than double the figure of 2015, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) said on Friday. The figure represented more than 90 percent of a total of 28,200 children entering the country by sea in 2016, the agency stressed in a statement. However, according to Italy's Interior Ministry, some 12,360 unaccompanied migrant children were registered in the country in 2015, a drop from the 13,026 recorded the previous year. "Such figures show an alarming increase in the flow of extremely vulnerable children, who risk their life to get to Europe,"

UNICEF senior emergency manager Lucio Melandri said. The majority of children travelling alone to Italy last year were from Eritrea, Egypt, Gambia, and Nigeria, with most of them boys aged between 15 and 17, according to UNICEF. But an increasing number of younger children and girls was detected. The UN agency appealed to the European governments for granting more protection to those children, especially to girls, who were believed to be particularly exposed to the risk of "sexual exploitation and abuse, including prostitution, at the hands of criminal networks." Several underage ...*(More on P4)...(21)*

Nieghbor News

Chinese President's Visit to Switzerland to Have Stabilizing Effect on Europe, World

GENEVA - Swiss President Doris Leuthard said Thursday that the upcoming visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping will have a stabilizing effect on both Europe and the world in light of the many changes and challenges affecting the international landscape. "I think there are different expectations, (and) it will be a very important visit for the whole of Europe and perhaps with some elements that have worldwide recognitions," Leuthard told Xinhua in an interview. "As you know we are in a difficult situation ... I think China can use this situation to show its world power status and how it can be a factor of stability," she added. She was referring to the changes of governments

which have already taken place or could take place in some big powers of the world, as well as lingering tensions in several country-to-country relations. Switzerland was among the first European countries to recognize China's market economy status, the first Western countries to establish diplomatic relationship with the People's Republic of China, said Leuthard. She attributed the development of bilateral relations to the trust and confidence between Berne and Beijing, as well as the fruits of many years of discussions, meetings and mutual understanding. This bilateral relationship will be reinforced by Xi's visit, and new space will be ...*(More on P4)...(22)*

Iran, Syria Urge More Coordination Ahead of Astana Peace Talks

TEHRAN - Senior Iranian and Syrian diplomats have stressed the importance of boosting coordination and consultations ahead of the planned intra-Syrian peace talks in the Kazakh capital of Astana. Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Arab and African Affairs Hossein Jaber Ansari held a telephone conversation with Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Faisal al-Miqdad on Saturday. The two diplomats exchanged views about the latest developments prior to the Astana negotiations between representatives from the Damascus government and foreign-sponsored opposition groups in Astana on Janu-

ary 23. Jaber Ansari and Miqdad said Tehran and Damascus must help find a political solution to the Syria crisis. The Iranian diplomat on Friday held separate meetings in Moscow with the Russian deputy foreign minister and special presidential envoy for the Middle East and North Africa, Mikhail Bogdanov, and Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister Ahmet Unal Cevikoz. The sides discussed various aspects of the forthcoming peace talks in Astana. The negotiations, which exclude the Daesh and Jabhat Fateh al-Sham Takfiri terrorist groups, will be mediated by Russia, Turkey, and Iran. (Presstv)

Gen. Sharif to Speak on Terrorism at Davos Meeting

ISLAMABAD - Former Pakistani army chief retired General Raheel Sharif, who enjoys an impressive record of successfully leading a war against terrorism, has been invited to the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, where he will speak on the subject of terrorism. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will lead the Pakistani delegation to the meeting, which will be chaired jointly by Brian T. Moynihan of the Bank

of America, award-winning documentary maker Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy, Helle Thorning-Schmidt, Frans van Houten and Meg Whitman. This is the first time that a former army chief of Pakistan has been invited to speak at the WEF. Earlier, Gen Pervez Musharraf addressed the forum, but in his capacity as the head of a state. A spokesperson for the WEF confirmed on Friday that retired Gen. Sharif ...*(More on P4)...(23)*

Rahmaon Appoints Eldest Son as Capital's Mayor

DUSHANBEH - Tajikistan's President Emomali Rahmon has appointed his son as mayor of the capital city Dushanbe, apparently dropping a hint about who he views as his successor. Rustami Emomali, the president's eldest son, has already occupied positions in government, security and business—in some cases, working

multiple roles at once. The 29-year-old has an impressive CV, having worked as a city councillor in Dushanbe, worked for the committee of state property, headed the Youth Council of Tajikistan, headed the Customs Service and headed the state anti-corruption watchdog. He has also founded his own major ...*(More on P4)...(24)*

Uzbekistan, Bangladesh Boosting Tourism Cooperation

TASHKENT - The Embassy of Bangladesh in Uzbekistan hosted an event dedicated to the tourism cooperation between the two countries, reports UZA. Ambassador of Bangladesh Mosud Mannan speaking at the event said that the relationship between Bangladesh and Uzbekistan are developing in vari-

ous spheres, including in tourism. "We have a huge opportunity for development of partnership in the fields of tourism, business, ecotourism, medicine, culture and etc. We plan to establish air communication between Tashkent and Dhaka, which will contribute to expansion of bilateral ties," he said. (AKI)