

U.S. initial jobless claims rise slightly

WASHINGTON, April 18 (Xinhua) -- The number of Americans initially applying for unemployment aid rose slightly last week, the U.S. Labor Department reported Thursday. The advance figure for seasonally adjusted initial claims for jobless benefits was 352,000 in the week ending April 13, up 4,000 from the revised figure of 348,000 in the previous week. Meanwhile, the four-week moving average, which helps smooth out week-to-week volatility, edged up to 361,250 from 358,500 in the previous week. A reading below 375,000 generally indicates a sustained drop in the unemployment rate. The advance figure for seasonally-adjusted insured unemployment during the week ending April 6 stood at 3.068 million, down 35,000 from the previous week. The slight increase in claims for jobless benefits last week indicated that the labor market was stabilizing rather than getting worse. In March, the U.S. unemployment rate dropped to 7.6 percent with the total non-farm payroll employment increasing by 88,000, which was only about half of the previous 12 months when an average of 169,000 jobs were added each month.