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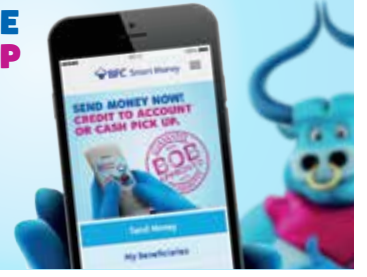
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Germany weighs sanctions against Iran

Berlin

Germany is lobbying among European allies to agree new sanctions against Iran in an attempt to prevent U.S. President Donald Trump from terminating an international deal curbing Tehran's nuclear program, *Der Spiegel* magazine reported on Saturday.

The report cited diplomats in Brussels as saying that Germany was pushing for new sanctions together with Britain and France to show the United States that European allies were taking Trump's criticism against Iran seriously.

A German foreign ministry spokeswoman and another

government spokesman both declined to comment on the report.

Germany wants to punish Iran for its missile program and its meddling in conflicts in other Middle East countries, such as the war in Yemen and Syria, the report said.

Above all, the aim of the

Europeans is to prevent the United States from terminating the nuclear agreement sealed in 2015, as repeatedly threatened by Trump, *Der Spiegel* reported. Iran said last week it would retaliate against new sanctions imposed by Washington after Trump set an ultimatum to fix "disastrous flaws" in a

deal curbing Tehran's nuclear program. Trump has said he would waive nuclear sanctions on Iran for the last time to give the United States and European allies a final chance to amend the pact. Washington also imposed sanctions on the head of Iran's judiciary and others. -Reuters



EXCLUSIVE
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11th Hour

Airstrikes pound Syria's Afrin

Beirut

Turkey opened a new front in Syria's war yesterday, launching airstrikes against a U.S.-backed Kurdish militia in Afrin province that raise the prospect of worsening relations between Ankara and NATO ally Washington. The operation sees Ankara confronting Kurdish fighters allied to the US at a time when ties between Turkey and US - appear dangerously close to a breaking point. (Reuters)



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Saudi shoots down Houthi missile fired toward Narjan



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Hazy, dusty weather in parts of Bahrain

US Govt shut down

Washington

The US government shut down at midnight on Friday after Democrats and Republicans, locked in a bitter dispute over immigration and border security, failed to agree on a last-minute deal to fund its operations.

But both sides may now be even less willing to make concessions because a political defeat on the issue could be costly, especially with the control of Congress up for grabs at midterm elections later this year.

The Republican-controlled House of Representatives passed a stopgap funding measure on Thursday. But Republicans then needed the support of at least 10 Democrats to pass the bill in the Senate. While five Democrats ended up voting for the measure, five Republicans voted against it.

Democratic leaders wanted the measure to include protections from deportation for about 700,000

undocumented immigrants who arrived in the United States as children.

Despite bipartisan negotiations, Republican leaders refused to include those protections, and neither side was willing to back down.

Trump, who had made strict measures on immigration a cornerstone of his presidential campaign, last week rejected a bipartisan proposal.

He said he wanted to include any deal for Dreamers in a bigger legislative package that also boosted funding for a wall and tighter security measures along the U.S. border with Mexico.

Schumer met with Trump on Friday afternoon and later said he had reluctantly agreed to include the border wall in the negotiations but that it still was not enough to persuade Trump to find a compromise.

McConnell said he would seek over the weekend a new funding bill that covered the federal government through to Feb. 8.

A Senate Democratic source said that was still too far out. Democrats had argued for an extension of just four or five days to force both sides into serious negotiations on the immigration issue. - Reuters

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No talks until govt reopened: Trump

Washington

President Donald Trump and Republican lawmakers took a tough stance yesterday after the U.S. Congress failed to fund federal agencies, saying they would not negotiate on immigration until Democrats help end the government shutdown. "The president will not negotiate on immigration reform until Democrats stop playing games and reopen the government," White House spokeswoman Sarah

Sanders said. Her message was echoed by Republicans in Congress, leading to speculation that Washington could be in for a prolonged battle that has interrupted government services. Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer gave a stinging portrayal of Trump as an unreliable negotiating partner, saying the two sides came close to an agreement several times only to have Trump back out at the urging of anti-immigration conservatives. -Reuters

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