

Lebanon, Iran make moves toward cooperation, Beirut sources say

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Beirut - Lebanon's Western-backed Prime Minister Fouad Seniora has agreed with Iranian officials to draw up a framework for bilateral cooperation between the two nations ahead of a possible visit by Seniora to Tehran, a governmental source said Monday. Mohammad Shibani, Iran's ambassador to Lebanon, met with the prime minister over the weekend and renewed his invitation for Seniora to visit Tehran, the source, who requested anonymity, said.

"The renewal of the invitation does not mean the trip is going to take place anytime soon," the source said, noting that any decisions is "pending a visit by an Iranian delegation to Beirut to draw up the frame of bilateral cooperation between the two countries."

The source stressed that Seniora had no objection to visiting Iran.

Iran is the main backer of the Lebanese Shiite Movement Hezbollah, which is currently leading the Lebanese opposition against the Seniora government and his allies, the anti-Syrian March 14 camp.

In May 2008, Hezbollah protested a decision by Seniora's government to sack a Hezbollah supporter acting as head of security at Beirut international airport.

The decision prompted Hezbollah and their opposition allies to close roads. The action later escalated into bloody clashes between the opposition supporters of the ruling coalition. The fighting lasted seven days and resulted in 82 deaths more than 200 wounded.

The fighting stopped after Qatar called for an emergency meeting of all Lebanese rivals in Doha to sign an agreement of reconciliation.

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