

Myanmar opposition leader killed

by UPI

YANGON, Myanmar - A prominent leader of an ethnic minority group fighting the military junta in Myanmar was shot and killed Thursday, the Financial Times reported. Two men in a pickup truck repeatedly shot 64-year-old Padoh Mahn Sha in his home town of Mae Sot near the border with Thailand, the report said. No one had claimed responsibility for the killing. Mahn Sha was a senior leader of the large ethnic group, the Karen National Union, for the past two years. He had served as a major contact with the pro-democracy movement in Myanmar, formerly Burma, led by Nobel-prize winning Aung San Suu Kyi whose democratic vision, he felt, offered the best protection of ethnic minority rights, the report said. At the time of his death, Mahn Sha was involved with an association of exile groups offering peaceful resistance to the military regime. The report said his assassination comes on the heels of an announcement by the junta for a referendum in May on a draft constitution. Critics contend the document is only an attempt to "legalize" the military rule, offering no concessions to minorities' hope for autonomy.

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