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Sportswear boycott over Burma links

Leading kit supplier accused of helping regime

Vivek Chaudhary
Chief sports correspondent

Football fans are being urged by campaigners to boycott the sportswear firm Kappa, which supplies some of the game's leading teams, following claims that many of its products sold in Britain are manufactured in Burma.

Teams such as Tottenham Hotspur, Wales and Italy wear kits supplied by Kappa but campaigners for democracy in Burma claim that it is inadvertently helping the country's brutal military regime by buying products made there.

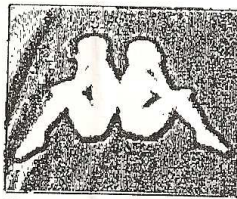
The Burmese military regime has been heavily criticised for its human rights record and for the way it has suppressed pro-democracy movements.

Textile exports are one of the biggest sources of revenue for the Burmese military regime, which is believed to have killed thousands of people in its suppression of democracy. Campaigners claim that last year alone, £50m worth of textiles were imported to Britain from Burma.

Last month, the Burma Campaign, the British-based pressure group campaigning for democracy in Burma scored a notable victory after JJB Sports, the country's largest sports retailer agreed to withdraw stock manufactured in Burma.

Campaigners say they have also sent hundreds of letters and emails to Kappa's headquarters in Italy asking for it to withdraw from Burma.

Mark Farmaner, campaigns officer for the Burma Campaign, said: "We have con-



Kappa supplies kit to football teams in Britain

tacted the company several times and have not received any response.

"If they are willing to show us that they have pulled out of Burma then we will call off our boycott."

But Kappa says it stopped manufacturing products in Burma earlier this year and that it no longer has any business links in the country.

A spokesman for Kappa GB said: "We no longer source any products from Burma. Our

headquarters in Turin are responsible for sourcing products around the world. We stopped doing business in Burma at the start of this year. It became clear that we had to move to another country."

Mr Farmaner, however, claims to have found Burma-made Kappa products in a London West End store last month.

"If Kappa are no longer manufacturing in Burma then we want to see the evidence," he said. "We are still finding their products in British stores that have been made in Burma."

"In the meantime, our message to football fans and all sports fans is contact Kappa and tell them that you are boycotting their goods."

"The money that is being made by Burma is being used to pay for rape, torture and the suppression of human rights."

The campaign to boycott Kappa is being supported by pro-democracy campaigners within Burma who have also called for sanctions against other specific products that generate high revenue for the military regime.

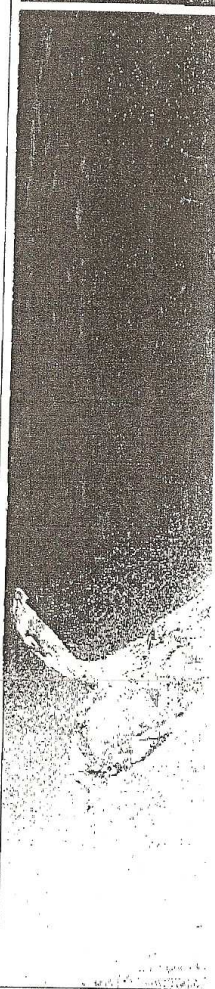
Last Friday, Aung San Suu Kyi, the country's leading pro-democracy campaigner, who has been detained for a total of 14 years, was once again put under house arrest.

A spokesman for JJB Sports, which was founded by former Blackburn Rovers footballer David Whelan said: "The company accepts there was an oversight [on stocking Burmese-made products] which will be remedied."

"We have been in contact with the Burma Campaign and have reiterated our commitment not to purchase goods that have been manufactured there."

Additional reporting by Jason Rodriguez

Catwalk run



Exuberant evening gowns
a silk shirt and skirt from t

Trend spot



Links

burmacampaign.org.uk
Burma Campaign
www.kappa.com Kappa
guardian.co.uk/burma

Made in the far east

Nike
Manufactures goods mainly in China, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam

Adidas
Goods mainly manufactured in Indonesia, Thailand and other parts of the far east

Reebok
Vietnam, Thailand and a number of products manufactured in Britain.

New Balance
China, Vietnam and Mexico

Umbro
Football made in Pakistan. Other factories based in the far east