

**Press Release**

**Pakistan's first shoe-last manufacturing facility boosts competitiveness for the footwear industry**

6 August 2015

**Lahore** — The Australian High Commissioner-designate Margaret Adamson unveiled the new Intra-Systek shoe-last manufacturing facility today at a ceremony attended by Pakistan's footwear industry.

Joined by CEO of Intra-Systek, Mr Abid Hafeez, and CEO of Pakistan's largest footwear exporter, Servis Footwear, Mr Omer Saeed, the inauguration marked a key milestone in the partnership between Intra-Systek and the Market Development Facility (MDF). The Australian Government is investing AU\$9.9 million in MDF.

On opening the facility, which is the first of its kind in Pakistan, Ms Adamson said it would usher in a new level of competitiveness for the Pakistan shoe industry by manufacturing plastic shoe-lasts—the foundation of any shoe—traditionally imported from India, China or Italy.

“Australia is keen to encourage Pakistan's economic growth, and partnerships with industry leaders like Intra-Systek are essential to this aim,” she said. “I hope that better access to quality plastic shoe-lasts will boost exports and increase the competitiveness of Pakistan-made footwear.”

The Market Development Facility is partnering with businesses like Intra-Systek to stimulate investment, business innovation and regulatory reform that benefits poor people working in Pakistan's dairy, meat, leather and horticulture industries.

The partnership with Intra-Systek aims to develop the local footwear and leather sectors, creating 380 new full and part-time jobs, including for women. Currently Pakistan's leather sector employs around 250,000 male and female workers. Much of the leather is exported, with only 15 per cent of this as finished leather goods. Footwear is considered a market segment that has much potential.

“Access to locally manufactured plastic shoe-lasts is really going to stimulate this important and growing industry,” Mr Saeed said.

“Matching the quality standards of the imported lasts so that clients don't have to compromise on quality is important,” said Mr Hafeez. “We're pleased to be igniting this first-of-its-kind production in the sector and contribute to growth of Pakistan's footwear industry.”

The Market Development Facility has partnerships with 14 businesses in Pakistan and is aiming to work with 40 businesses by 2017.

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