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PRESS RELEASE

Ministry of Investment Team Tours Southern Industries

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A team from the Ministry of Investment continues its tour of industries in southern Belize. On September 3, 2022, the team visited Belize Crafts Limited, better known as Maya Bags, in Punta Gorda Town.

Belize Crafts Limited produces handmade, design-driven accessories such as women's bags and other fashion items crafted by Maya women artisans. The company works with 90 women from eight villages in the Toledo District. It targets tourism centers in Belize and upscale markets in the USA. However, COVID-19 has created some challenges to its market base, so the company is making strategic decisions to return to pre-pandemic sales levels. The ministry expressed its commitment to finding ways to support the plans that the company has for its growth and sustainability.

The ministry's team also visited Mahogany Chocolate Factory in Punta Gorda Town. The company produces artisan chocolate products including chocolate bars, chocolate powder for drinks and cooking, as well as gift items. The factory produces mainly for the local market and particularly for tourism centers. The company owns 300 acres of cacao with half of the products sold as cacao bean exports and the other half as value-added products. There are also plans to start exporting value-added products to Panama.

The final visit of the tour was to the Toledo Cacao Growers Association (TCGA) at the Maya House of Cacao in Mafredi Village. TCGA has over 400 members including 26 women farmers who collectively export cacao beans to the USA, Japan, Germany and other European countries. The ministry's team toured the association's facilities and was given a presentation on plans to expand into the value addition of the organic cacao being produced. The facilities are expected to more than double in size. TCGA representatives also discussed their challenges and plans for expansion.

The Ministry's team, including representatives from the Investment Policy and Compliance Unit, is led by Mrs. Narda Garcia, Chief Executive Officer in the Office of the Prime Minister and Investment.

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