

MV Switchgear secures new contract for Kamoa-Kakula copper mine

MV Switchgear completed two significant projects over the past two years. These projects involved the manufacture, supply, and installation of numerous air-insulated switchgear (AIS) panels for 11kV substations at the expansive new Kamoa-Kakula copper mine in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The company produced and supplied a total of 233 of its renowned SBV4E brand of AIS switchgear panels to equip both surface and underground substations at the new mine. This included 140 panels for eight surface substations and 93 panels for five underground substations.



MV Switchgear awarded new contracts. Source: Supplied.

Following the successful completion of these projects, MV Switchgear has been awarded an additional contract. This involves the provision of GELPAG solid insulated switchgear (SIS) units for further underground substations at the mine.

The contract for 149 GELPAG SIS units, awarded late last year, is set for delivery in August this year. This new contract was necessitated by changes in underground conditions at the mine as mining operations progressed.



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Lindsey Schutters 1 Nov 2023



“Harsh environmental conditions such as high levels of humidity and dust were found to be present in these underground sections, necessitating having to introduce more specialised switchgear equipped to cope with these conditions,” said Rhett Kelly, MV Switchgear’s design and development manager.

“In such a situation the choice is typically between fixed pattern gas-insulated switchgear (GIS) and solid-dielectric-insulated switchgear (SIS). We were confident in recommending to DRA Global of South Africa, the engineering consultants for the Kamoa project, our GELPAG SIS product for this purpose.”

Growing demand

The company experienced growing demand for GELPAG since introducing it into the local market in late-2020, it recently

arranged in collaboration with its overseas-based OEM partner to commence local manufacture of some of the product's ancillary components.

"By taking this step we've substantially shortened the production lead times, as we can now manufacture the agreed locally produced components in parallel with the OEM's production of the main product, thereby speeding up both final assembly of the product in our plant as well as delivery to the end-user," Rhett said.

The Kamoā mine will be the first recipient of GELPAG panels in terms of the new arrangement.

Johan Jordaan, the division's technology development specialist, said: "The components being manufactured locally now and in the future are the LV compartment, internal arc ducting and the drop-down boxes for the cable terminations.

"While not normally required for the GELPAG product range, custom drop-down boxes have been designed to accommodate the 3-core cable terminations with core balance CTs specified by the customer."

"To further speed up and simplify production and delivery, we've developed an LV connector system which allows the panel's circuit-breaker, disconnector and earth switch wiring to interface with the LV control wiring via a standard multi-pin plug-and-socket system," he added.

MV Switchgear has also developed a wiring test rig to enable it to test and verify the wiring of each LV compartment before the GELPAG panels they are to be connected to arrive from abroad.

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