

# New minerals survey launched

By John B. Thawite

A new mineral exploration survey programme was last week launched in Kasese and Bunyangabu districts.

The programme is being undertaken by Ms cobalt and Geo Tech Ltd, both Canadian firms. The official launch, which took place at Kasese airfield was attended by district officials and presided over by the acting director Geological Survey and Mining, Zackary Baguma in the minerals ministry.

Guests cheered and clapped in excitement as the helicopter momentarily paused hovering over them with ring-shaped gadgets dangling below it.

## THE INVESTMENT

In a brief interview on the sidelines of the function, one of the M2 co-directors, Thomas Lamb, said the programme, kick-started with \$5m (about sh18.33b) being injected in mapping the underground mineral deposits of Kasese and Bunyangabu districts.

"This is not mining but merely finding the deposits and then mining happens six to ten years



(Left to right) M2Cobalt directors Thomas Lamb and Andy Edelmeyer at the official launch of the multi-billion airborne geophysical mineral survey in Kasese

later," Lamb told *New Vision*. He explained that the equipment rigged on the helicopter, was advanced and capable of mapping the minerals underground.

"The preliminary findings are very promising. Nobody should get excited yet but there is a very big chance," Lamb said.

The M2Cobalt chief finance officer, Andy Edelmeyer, said the world was currently short of certain critical metals such as cobalt, which is used in making batteries for devices such as mobile phones and vehicles.

He added that Uganda has world-class deposits of cobalt and associated metals such as copper, nickel and gold.

## UGANDA ATTRACTIVE

Edelmeyer said M2Cobalt had chosen to invest in Uganda because it is a stable and secure country to work, live and invest in.

"The neighbouring DRC, which currently produces about 65% of the world's cobalt, has a difficult working environment and, as a Canadian company, we are very aware of the importance of avoiding any issues related to conflict, child labour and human rights abuses."

He also described Uganda's mining code as "transparent and predictable" though it is undergoing review.

"The people of Uganda have been a major factor in our

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decisions to invest here," he said.

He explained that the ministries and departments, especially the directorate of geological surveys and mining, have been very welcoming.

"In general, we find the people we work with at all levels are smart, motivated, energized, warm and welcoming," he said.

## EYES KILEMBE

Edelmeyer received further cheers when he also revealed that M2Cobalt has formally written to the Government expressing interest in re-developing and revitalising Kilembe Mines and re-establishing a world-class mineral processing facility.

In a speech read for her by Baguma, energy and mineral development minister, Eng Iren Muloni said the survey was a follow-up on earlier airborne geophysical survey which had been undertaken by the Government in 80% of the country including Kasese region. The data acquired in that phase is what had interested M2Cobalt. "We are thrilled that M2Cobalt is investing in mineral exploration in Uganda," she said, adding that an improved mineral sector promises sustainable wealth creation, employment and inclusive growth.

She welcomed investors who are interested in reviving Kilembe Mines, noting that its collapse had created a dent in the economy.

"Over 6,000 people were directly employed and Kasese town and surrounding areas saw tremendous economic growth and job creation," she noted.

Representing the ministry's permanent secretary, Agnes Alaba, the commissioner mines department, said the mineral sector was one of the pillars for the realisation of the national development plan.

"To achieve this, we need to explore for and responsibly develop more mine to international standards that ensure board-based and inclusive benefits at local and national levels," Alaba said.

Margret Achol Komuruti, a small-scale miner, appealed to M2Cobalt directors to intervene in the plight of the ill-protected salt miners.

"The brine is a health hazard to them because it affected their reproductive organs as a result of poor or no protective gear," she said.

Achol also requested for water and sanitation facilities for the salt workers.

Leaders in the two districts pledged support towards the programme but called for co-operation from M2Cobalt.

Mining content



The helicopter borne geophysical mineral survey that was launched for Kasese and Bunyangabu districts on Thursday. Photo by John Thawite



The Defunct Kilembe mines in Kasese. M2Cobalt company has expressed interest in re-developing Kilembe Mines