

Kano Supplementary Election:

Battle Ground State for Governor

22nd March, 2019



There were 29 candidates that contested for governor of Kano State but the major battle had always been between Governor Abdullahi Ganduje of the APC and his main rival from the PDP, Alhaji Abba Kabiru Yusuf. Governor Ganduje got significant negative publicity and a dent to his image after allegations and wide circulation of video material depicting him receiving millions of dollars bribery in cash. His rival of the PDP, Abba Kabiru Yusuf was tainted by the way he was perceived as an imposition of former governor Kwankwaso. In fact, his candidature was earlier nullified by a Federal High Court in Kano for not emerging through proper primaries. The case remains a threat to him if he wins the supplementary elections.

For almost four years, Kano has been a theatre of open battle between the Kwankwasiyya and Gandujiyya political divides. The former is a mass political movement led by Senator Rabiu Kwankwaso, former presidential aspirant under the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), former governor and ex-minister. On the other side of the divide is incumbent governor, Umar Ganduje, an estranged aide and protégé of Kwankwaso, who has sworn to retire his former benefactor from Kano politics in the coming polls. Both men have large following and the supplementary election would be the decisive battle to settle the issue.

The final battleground would be Gama ward, one of the eleven wards of Nasarawa Local Government where supplementary elections would be holding tomorrow. The place has been a beehive of activity. On Thursday, hundreds of women were bused off to Government House for a meeting with the First Lady. Two weeks before the supplementary elections, the Kano State Government released millions of Naira for the rapid development of Gama. Gama is a terrible, densely populated run-down dirty slum in the centre of metropolitan Kano without tarred roads, potable water supply of functional health facilities. No one can therefore question why development projects are now going on with rapidity. The only question is the timing. Almost everyone is questioning the ethics of timing of activities just for the elections taking place tomorrow. Such activities might influence the outcome of the supplementary election in the state taking place tomorrow, Saturday.

Governor Ganduje currently trails the governorship candidate of the Peoples' Democratic Party, Abba Kabir-Yusuf, by about 26,000 votes in the election declared inconclusive by the electoral commission, INEC. Because the margin of lead is less than the 141,694 votes cancelled, supplementary elections will now be held in the affected areas, including Gama, one of the most populated with 40,821 registered voters. In the governorship elections, only 13,148 voters were accredited in Gama. Out of these, 7,574 voted for the PDP and 4,080 voted for APC and the game of numbers accounts for all the attention Gama is currently receiving.

Over the past week, Gama Primary Healthcare Centre has been under renovation. It has also been used as a distribution centre of delivery kits for pregnant women. The most intensive activity was at the Isa Kaita Primary Healthcare Centre where major renovation work has been ongoing. The workers at the site said they have been told to work continuously to complete the work before the supplementary election.

Meanwhile, the Kwankwasiya group has been inviting the young men of Gama for rallies at his house. The Governor has informed the police that he will be visiting Gama every day this week to supervise development projects so the police are not allowing the PDP to go and campaign in Gama. Since Kwankwaso cannot go to Gama, the men of Gama are going to his house for campaign rallies. What is interesting is that the APC is mobilising the women of Gama while the PDP is focusing on the men from the same families.

The major road in Gama was tarred earlier this week. Currently, 20 boreholes are being constructed in all parts of Gama, none of them is completed and voters are thinking hard about what would happen to the projects depending on how they vote. A lot of cash is flowing with direct payments 10,000 Naira being made to women to start businesses allegedly for poverty alleviation. Football kits are also due to be shared to selected clubs located in the area on Thursday and a programme of improving mosques has been announced and Dr. Ganduje's handlers have said that the governor will perform the congregational Friday prayer there.

It would be recalled that Gama's result was cancelled in the aftermath of the March 9 governorship election. The cancellation followed an attack on the local government's collation centre on March 11 allegedly led by top officials of the Abdullahi Ganduje administration. Reports indicate that the attack was believed to have been led by the state's deputy governor, Nasiru Gawuna. Chaos was created and in the process the result sheet for Gama on which there were on-going arguments about some of the entries was destroyed. Alhaji Gawuna, the commissioner for local government, Murtala Garo, and chairman of the local government area and Lamin Sani, were arrested by the police at the scene. However,

the police command letter issued a statement confirming the involvement of Messrs Garo and Sani, promising to charge them to court after investigation.

It is clear that there is a massive process of on-going voter inducement on both sides of the divide. All development projects in Kano State have stopped except and there is total focus on Gama. What is of even more concern is vote suppression. Since the supplementary elections were announced, all sorts of agents have been moving from house to house to either outright purchase of permanent voter cards or for a lesser fee, purchase of the information on the cards. I do not see what the information can be used for but maybe the politicians know more than I do.

Meanwhile, the political tension in the State has arisen to the maximum level and there are fears of political violence whichever way the results go. On Wednesday, the Kano Peace Committee made a passionate appeal to the political class to keep the peace. Various additional appeals were also made by the Emir of Kano and other associations.



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