

By Abdul-Rauf Musa

All things being equal, Kaduna State will have a new governor in the next six months to steer the ship of the state for another four years. Needless to say, the ruling party, the PDP, which has been in power for 12 uninterrupted years, would want to maintain the status quo, while the opposition parties, especially the General Muhammadu Buhari-led Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) are determined to stop it from making it to the Sir Kashim Ibrahim House for the fourth consecutive time.

As usual in every election year, each of the competing political parties has a plethora of contestants consisting both the serious and the not-so-serious aspirants serious. There are also the plain attention-seekers whose aim is to give advance notice of their presence and availability for a political appointment in the event that their party wins the election.

Given the strength of the various political parties in the state, it would seem that next year's contest would be a straight fight between the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and Congress for Progressive Change (CPC). ANPP's unmaking in the state would seem to be its participation in the then government of Mohammed Namadi Sambo, where two of its members were appointed in the state's executive council in which they still serve.

To start with, the incumbent governor, Ibrahim Patrick Yakowa, who is a tested technocrat, has held many political appointments at both state and federal levels. He succeeded Arch. Mohammad Namadi Sambo who moved on to become vice-president, following the death of President Umaru Musa Yar'adua. Governor Yakowa would no doubt like to succeed himself in 2011. He has a number of factors to his advantage, including the incumbency factor and the fact that he is the first person to be a governor from Kaduna South Senatorial Zone, thereby breaking an age-long jinx of power shift to the area.

In addition to that, he is pursuing many programmes and projects as well as addressing many issues aimed at wooing the various groups in the state. These include salary increment for the civil servants and the adoption of the Islamic calendar in the Kaduna state schedules. He also has state's resources to deploy for his projects, and may possibly co-opt the delegates in order to emerge the PDP's flag bearer.

However, Yakowa appears to have excess baggage to contend with, if he eventually emerges as the PDP flag bearer. These include the disenchantment with the PDP, which has been in power for 12 years without much to showcase by way of concrete achievements, but only institutional decay, abject poverty at all levels and the brazen display of affluence by the party's stalwarts at the expense of the general public.

Furthermore, there is a disquiet within the Kaduna PDP allegedly brewing between Yakowa and Vice-President Mohammad Namadi Sambo, over the allegations that Namadi Sambo has left a huge debt profile for the state which is militating against successful smooth governance in the state. The alleged interference in the governance of the state by the Vice President, and many accusations and counter-accusations fuelled by their political associates, is now causing disaffections between the two leaders.

The ruling party is also weighted down by a handful of powerful aspirants such as the party's alleged 'Mr. Fix it,' Suleiman Hunkuyi and former finance commissioner and a bosom friend of

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the former governor, now Senator Ahmed Mohammed Makarfi. Hunkuyi was alleged to have fallen apart with both Makarfi and Namadi Sambo, and is allegedly out to settle scores with the duo. However, he has somewhat eased on his campaign lately as he is alleged to have been paid the N500m for the contract he executed during Namadi's administration by Governor Yakowa. Unconfirmed sources alleged that he is even contemplating decamping to CPC to actualise his dream.

Another aspirant is the Executive Director in the Dangote Group, Alhaji Idris Mikati, a serial gubernatorial aspirant who always backs down when the race gets tough.

The Kaduna State chapter of the ANPP has two aspirants in the persons of Senator Ahmed Aruwa and Alhaji Mohammed Sani Abbas. Their chances are as good as the shrinking size of the party in the state.

The CPC has five governorship aspirants, with Alhaji Mohammed Sani Sha'aban leading the pack. He is a Zaria-born politician cum businessman who, after a one-term stint in the House of Representatives, contested the governorship election under the ANPP in 2007.

Among Sha'aban's many advantages over the remaining aspirants are that there is a seeming consensus among the masses in the state that he has suffered enough in the hands of the PDP, thereby casting him as the 'governor-in-waiting.' In addition to that, his closeness to the leader of the party, General Buhari is seen as an added advantage. When Sha'aban recently formalised his entry into CPC, almost all roads seemed to have led to the ancient city of Zaria and as people from all over the country attended the occasion to catch a glimpse of the duo. He is the only aspirant, who has grassroots structure in the entire state with offices in all the local governments, including the offices put in place for his supporters, such as market women, various youth organisations among others. He is becoming a de facto party leader in the state, because various aspirants for elective offices, be it at a state or at federal levels troop to him for consultations and advices. Another advantage is that he may be the only one that will deliver among the pack of the CPC aspirants. His only weakness is that he may have to contend with a possible gang-up by the ruling party to make sure that he did not emerge as CPC flag bearer. Haruna Seed Kajuru is one of the earliest aspirants who decamped from PDP to contest the governorship of the state. As the state's Accountant-General for the last 12 years, Kujuru is said to be very wealthy and can execute his campaign without any hiccups. His main albatross is that almost all the people from the various zones in the state are sceptical about his candidature, insinuating that he may be PDP mole sent to block the stage for any powerful candidate that may give PDP tough time, and that if he wins, he may likely defect back to the PDP. He has only few non-functional offices in the entire state. Furthermore, his campaign activities are managed by his former PDP friends.

In addition to that also, there is a general apathy from his hometown, Kajuru, about his candidature, because people are said not to be happy with him, for his alleged inability to influence any state's project to the town or securing employment for his people, during his tenure as the Accountant-General and executive-secretary of NEITI.

The remaining CPC governorship aspirants who only seem to exist on posters are AVM Rufai Garba, an elder brother to former FCT Minister Ahmed el-Rufai. AVM Rufai is a retired Air Force officer, who is not a politician and has never participated in any political activities. Rufai has only one office in the state to execute his governorship campaign.

Alhaji Umaru Dembo, a Zaria indigene and former Minister of State for Petroleum during late General Sani Abacha regime, is the most interesting among all the CPC aspirants. The aspirant does not seem to have a single office in the entire state, he only exists on posters pasted in the

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Kaduna metropolis and Zaria.

It is therefore obvious that the Kaduna 2011 governorship contest will be an interesting match between the ideologically-based CPC, and the PDP, which has misused the political capital it has had for the past 12 years as the ruling party in the state and at the center.