

# High unemployment rate was missing — Minority Leader

By Daniel Kenu & Nana Konadu Agyeman, PARLIAMENT HOUSE

**T**HE Minority Leader in Parliament, Dr Cassiel Ato Forson, has expressed surprise that the high rate of unemployment in the country did not find expression in President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo's two-hour State of the Nation Address (SONA) yesterday.

Dr Forson said out of the 33 million Ghanaian population, only 11.3 million were employed, a figure that includes peasant farmers.

He alleged that the difference between the two is those with no jobs and income.

"This means that two out of every three people are unemployed.

"Thirty per cent of the youth are jobless and about 4.5 million Ghanaians who are employable are outside the labour force," he noted.

Reacting to the President's address on the floor of Parliament yesterday, Dr Forson said "This number has easily given up because of years of frustration



• Dr Cassiel Ato Forson — Minority Leader in Parliament

and disappointment."

"The state of our nation is hopeless. No wonder that people, including professionals, are leaving the shores of Ghana in droves in search of greener pastures.

"Finally, Mr Speaker, I'm scandalised

and shocked to the marrow to have noticed that our President during the recent ministerial reshuffle had increased the size of his government," he observed.

"Today, we have a minister of finance domestic and minister of finance international," he lamented.

Comparing the current administration and that of former president, John Dramani Mahama, the Minority Leader said a dollar today exchange for GH¢13 as compared to GH¢3.8 to the dollar.

On the performance of President Akufo-Addo, Dr Forson said he could not have failed alone without his vice, Dr Mahamudu Bawumia.

"A vote for Bawumia is a vote for Nana Akufo-Addo.

"Ghanaians will not miss you. All we can say is bye-bye," he added.

## Drama

The President was due to have presented the SONA at 10 a.m. but due to the continued absence of Minority MPs in the chamber, the process was delayed.

The Minority MPs' seats remained

empty for a while until they eventually started showing up around 11 a.m.

Around 11.55 a.m. proceedings in the House began and the Speaker of Parliament, Alban Sumana Kingsford Bagbin, introduced the President and other dignitaries present in the House.

When the name of former President John Dramani Mahama, the flag bearer of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), was mentioned, members of the Minority Caucus stood up and banged their hands on the table, singing "Woye den a, J.M. beba" - to wit "Whatever you do, J.M. will come to power".

The sustained chants attracted the attention of the former President who signalled the Minority members to tone down.

But as the situation got out of hand, the Speaker was compelled to stamp his authority, warning the Minority MPs to put up good behaviour.

"Honourable members, when the Speaker is on his feet, everybody is seated and quiet.

"Please, this is a formal sitting of Parliament and all the rules apply; I would not be tempted and I would resist it to start enforcing some of the rules," he said.

Mr Bagbin said he knew 2024 was an election year but "my words can deselect some of you."

"My words on this chair can deselect a lot of you and kindly take note," he said, reminding the House that President Akufo-Addo was the President of the Republic.