

New British government agrees to pay New British government agrees to pay cut

By Jill Lawless (adapted), THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LONDON - Britain's first coalition government in seven decades _____(1) its inaugural meeting, as members of once-rival parties sat around the Cabinet table together -- and signalled their seriousness about deficit-slashing by agreeing to an _____(2) pay cut.

Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron presided over the gathering, sitting across from his deputy, Liberal Democrat leader Nick Clegg.

There are 18 Conservative ministers and five Liberal Democrats in the new Cabinet. The two parties forged a coalition government -- Britain's first since World War II -- after last week's national election produced a hung Parliament, in which no party has an overall majority. The Tories won 306 of the 650 House of Commons _____(3), the Labour Party 258 and the Lib Dems 57.

Cameron filled out his government team Thursday with a slew of junior ministerial appointments and visited key government departments to speak to civil servants.

"The more I think about this endeavour on which we have embarked, the more excited I become," Cameron told staff at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. "Because this coalition government, if we can make it work -- and I believe we can -- is a five-year government."

Among the first acts of the new Cabinet, which has said deficit-cutting is its top priority, was agreeing to take a 5 per cent pay cut and subsequent five-year salary _____(4) that the government says will _____(5) taxpayers 300,000 pounds (\$450,000) a year. The move leaves the prime minister's annual salary at 142,000 pounds, plus 65,000 pounds for sitting as a lawmaker. Other ministers get slightly less.

Clegg spoke Thursday night with U.S. Vice-President Joe Biden, after Cameron held phone _____(6) Tuesday with Obama.

"They looked forward to close co-operation _____(7) their governments on the shared challenges of Afghanistan, the global economy and international security," Britain's Cabinet Office said in a statement. Clegg "stressed that the U.S. and the U.K. acting in harness could make a dramatic difference."

New ministers emerged from Thursday morning's Cabinet meeting in 10 Downing St. smiling.

"It went very well," said Education Secretary Michael Gove. "I was delighted by the sense of partnership and common purpose."

"It's like we'd been working together _____(8) years," said Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith.

The right-of-centre Conservatives and the centre-left Lib Dems have hammered out a policy agreement with compromises on both sides. The third-place Lib Dems get moves toward the electoral reform they have long cherished, while the Tories retain key platform planks including an annual cap on immigration and cuts to public spending to _____(9) Britain's ballooning deficit.

Duncan Smith said the government's main task was "to get the economy back on track."

A BBC survey of economists who _____(10) the Treasury department found Thursday that most are predicting that the government will raise sales taxes to slash the record 153 billion-pound (\$225 billion) deficit.

Most of those questioned predicted an _____(11) in value added tax from its current 17.5 per cent to 20 per cent before the end of 2011.

Before the election, neither party had refused to _____(12) out the tax increase on goods and services.

Clegg and Cameron have also pledged sweeping reforms to Parliament, civil liberties laws and ties to Europe.

Cameron's office announced Conservative lawmaker David Lidington and Liberal Democrat Jeremy Browne would serve as junior ministers at Britain's Foreign Office, under Conservative _____(13) secretary William Hague.

The Labour Party, relegated to opposition after 13 years _____(14) power, is facing a leadership contest following the resignation of former Prime Minister Gordon Brown. So far only ex-Foreign Secretary David Miliband has announced his candidacy, but others are _____(15) to follow -- including, perhaps, Miliband's younger brother Ed.

Brown, meanwhile, confirmed Thursday that he will continue to sit in Parliament as a backbench Labour lawmaker. His predecessor, Tony Blair, quit the House of Commons when he stepped down as prime minister in June 2007.

Visiting a college in his Scottish home town of Kirkcaldy, Brown said he hoped _____(16) in Parliament "for these next few months and years."

"I _____(17) have given up one job, but the job that I love in politics is to be your Member of Parliament, and I hope we'll be able to work together," he said.

Put the correct words from the table below in the above article.

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|---------------|---------------|------------------|-----------------|
| a) took | b) holding | c) held | d) has |
| a) horrendous | b) hourly | c) increasing | d) immediate |
| a) places | b) schools | c) seats | d) votes |
| a) chill | b) freeze | c) refrigeration | d) stop |
| a) save | b) take | c) make | d) prevent |
| a) problems | b) contacts | c) meetings | d) talks |
| a) from | b) during | c) among | d) between |
| a) for | b) during | c) since | d) in |
| a) reduce | b) decreasing | c) cutting down | d) increase |
| a) advice | b) advise | c) advises | d) gives advice |
| a) decrease | b) reduction | c) increase | d) augmentation |
| a) work | b) find | c) rule | d) make |
| a) foreign | b) abroad | c) stranger | d) overseas |
| a) at | b) in | c) on | d) of |
| a) marked | b) expected | c) waited | d) wanted |
| a) for remain | b) to remain | c) for remaining | d) in remain |
| a) possibly | b) perhaps | c) may | d) maybe |