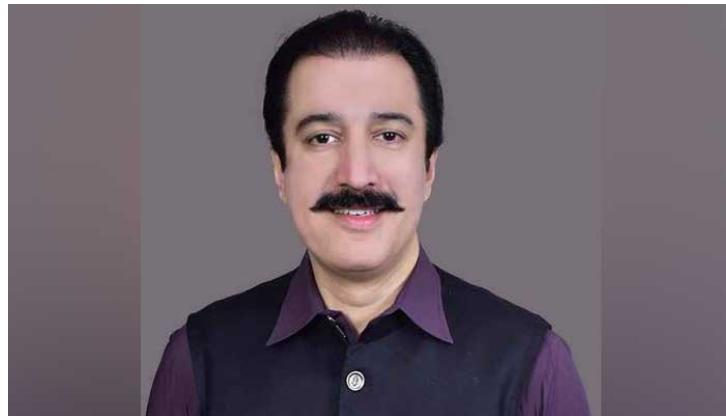


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## Faisal Mumtaz Rathore sworn in as Prime Minister of AJK:



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Altaf Hamid Rao.

MIRPUR (AJK): November 18: The newly elected Prime Minister, Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, took oath of office as the Prime Minister of Azad Jammu Kashmir on Tuesday.

Acting President of Azad Jammu & Kashmir, Chaudhry Latif Akbar, administered the oath of office to Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore as 16th Prime Minister of Azad government of the State of Jammu and Kashmir at the swearing-in ceremony held at the President house in the state metropolis Tuesday.

Our Special Jammu Kashmir state Correspondent Altaf Hamid Rao reports from Mirpur that the ceremony was attended by Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, In-charge Political Affairs Pakistan Peoples Party Azad Kashmir Ms. Faryal Talpur, Governor KPK Faisal Karim Kundi, Governor Gilgit-Baltistan Syed Mehdi Shah, President PPP AJK chapter Chaudhry Muhammad Yasin, former President Sardar Muhammad Yaqoob Khan, former PM Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan, President PML-N AJK chapter Shah Ghulam Qadir, and several others. Speaking on the occasion, Prime Minister Rathore expressed his gratitude to Allah for His blessings and for bestowing upon him the honour to serve the people of the state. "I also thank Prime Minister of Pakistan Mian Shahbaz Sharif for his decision to support the PPP in Azad Kashmir", PM said. Referring to his family's decades long relationship with the PPP, PM Rathore said, "In 1975, Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto gave my father, Mumtaz Hussain Rathore, the senior ministry, in 1990, Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto entrusted the post of Prime Minister to my father and today, I was elected as the Prime Minister". "I am grateful to my party for considering me worthy of

this position”, he maintained.

Terming it a huge responsibility, the PM said, “Fulfilling this duty in these challenging times is not easy; but I believe that Allah places as much burden as a person can endure”. “We will try our best to uphold the trust that the party Chairman has placed in us and will run state’s affairs effectively in a transparent manner”, he remarked. He said that his government was fully cognizant of the challenges ahead.

“We have a very short time but we will ensure that the things are sorted out in due course without wasting any time”, he noted. The PM, while reiterating his commitment to serve the masses with sincerity and integrity, said, “Besides providing basic amenities of life to people, we have to improve the process of accountability”. Describing Azad Kashmir as the base camp of the Kashmir Liberation Movement, the PM assured that the government would play its due role to promote the Kashmiris’ just cause both at national and international level.

“Along with advocating Kashmir case, the construction and development of liberated territory of Azad Kashmir remains our government’s top priority”, the PM said. Recalling his party’s longstanding position vis a vis the Kashmir dispute and its relationship with the people of the region, the PM said that the PPP has a very categorical, unambiguous and principled stand on the issue of Kashmir. Faisal Mumtaz Rathore thanked Bilawal Bhutto Zardari for his support in

bringing about the change in government. The move, he said, would be instrumental in breaking the stagnation and ensure peace and prosperity in the region.

While acknowledging the challenges ahead, he pledged to reconnect with the public and solve their problems. The prime minister paid rich tributes to the martyrs of the Pakistan army, who, he said, were offering their blood and sweat to safeguard the country's geographical and ideological frontiers.

The Prime Minister said that it was his first and foremost duty to remove the feeling of deprivation of the people. "We will ensure public service by setting up open courts and going to the grassroots level. We will serve the people and restore self-respect.

Today, people from all over Azad Kashmir have come to participate in the oath-taking ceremony, which is a manifestation of their trust and confidence over the leadership of people's party", he added. Recalling his father and former PM of the AJK Mumtaz Hussain Rathore, he said, "My father ruled for only nine months, but his style of government was so excellent that people still remember him".