Trump completes swing state sweep by taking Arizona

AFP- Donald Trump won the state of Arizona in this week's US presidential election, US TV networks projected on Saturday, completing the Republican's sweep of all seven swing states.

After four days of counting in the southwest state with a large Hispanic population, CNN and NBC projected Trump had obtained its 11 electoral votes as he defeated Vice President Kamala Harris.

Outgoing President Joe Biden scored a narrow but crucial victory in Arizona in 2020 that condemned Trump to defeat after his first term in office.

The scale and strength of Trump's comeback, which also saw the real estate tycoon win the popular vote by a margin of around four million votes, has sent shockwaves through the defeated Democratic Party.

The Republicans have already regained control of the Senate and look well set to retain a majority in the House of Representatives thanks to support from white working class voters and a large share of Hispanics.

CNN has called Republican victories for 213 seats in the House, with 218 needed for a majority in the lower chamber.

The networks' figures show Democrats on 205 seats, although senior party figures are still hoping they can pull off a slim victory that would significantly curtail Trump's powers.

NBC sees the Republicans with 212 seats so far, and 204 for the Democrats.

The other six swing states won by Trump in the presidential race are Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Michigan, North Carolina,

Nevada and Georgia.

The latest good news for Trump came as the White House said Biden would meet with the president-elect at the White House on Wednesday.

Trump – who never conceded his 2020 loss – sealed a remarkable comeback to the presidency in the November 5 vote, cementing what is set to be more than a decade of US politics dominated by his hardline right-wing stance.

This type of meeting between the outgoing and incoming presidents was considered customary, but Trump did not invite Biden for one after making unsubstantiated election fraud claims that culminated in the January 6, 2021 Capitol riot.

Trump also broke with precedent by skipping Biden's inauguration, but the White House has said the Democratic president will attend the upcoming ceremony.

Biden's meeting with Trump will take place in the Oval Office, the White House said Saturday, with the clock ticking down to the ex-president's return to power.

Trump, the 78-year-old ex-reality TV star, won wider margins than before, despite a criminal conviction, two impeachments while in office and warnings from his former chief of staff that he is a fascist.

Exit polls showed that voters' top concerns remained the economy and inflation that spiked under Biden in the wake of the Covid pandemic.

The 81-year-old president, who dropped out of the White House race in July over concerns about his age, health and mental acuity, called Trump on Wednesday to congratulate him on the election win.

– Trump 2.0 –

Democrats have been pointing fingers over who is to blame for Harris' decisive loss after she replaced Biden at the top of the ticket roughly 100 days before the election.

Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi took aim at Biden, telling The New York Times that "had the president gotten out sooner, there may have been other candidates in the race."

As the Democrats weigh what went wrong, Trump has begun to assemble his second administration by naming campaign manager Susie Wiles to serve as his White House chief of staff.

She is the first woman to be named to the high-profile role and the Republican's first appointment to his incoming administration.

— Jockeying for jobs —

Trump on Saturday ruled out re-appointing two senior figures from his first administration, secretary of state Mike Pompeo and UN ambassador Nikki Haley.

Abrasive former ambassador to Germany Ric Grenell is seen as a frontrunner for the secretary of state position, as is Florida Senator Marco Rubio who called Trump a "con artist" and the "most vulgar person to ever aspire to the presidency" in 2016.

The other frontrunners for a place in the Trump 2.0 administration reflect the significant changes it is likely to implement.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr., a leading figure in the anti-vaccine movement for whom Trump has pledged a "big role" in health care, told NBC News on Wednesday that "I'm not going to take away anybody's vaccines."

The world's richest man, Elon Musk, could also be in line for a job auditing government waste after the right-wing SpaceX, Tesla and X boss enthusiastically backed Trump.

AFP