



(From left) A supporter of the Democratic party react as they attend a watch party in Miami, Florida; and Republican supporters celebrate as they watch Ohio being called for Donald Trump at a Republican watch party in Michigan. Both photos were taken on US election day.



PHOTO: AFP

US formally exits Paris climate pact

REUTERS, Washington

The United States formally exited the Paris Agreement yesterday, fulfilling an old promise by President Donald Trump to withdraw the world's second-largest greenhouse gas emitter from the global pact to fight climate change.

But the outcome of the tight US election contest will determine for how long. Trump's Democratic rival, Joe Biden, has promised to rejoin the agreement if elected.

"The US withdrawal will leave a gap in our regime and the global efforts to achieve the goals and ambitions of the Paris Agreement," said Patricia Espinosa, executive secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The United States still remains a party to the UNFCCC. Espinosa said the body will be "ready to assist the US in any effort in order to rejoin the Paris Agreement."

Trump first announced his intention to withdraw the United States from the pact in June 2017, arguing it would undermine the US economy. The administration formally served notice of the withdrawal to the United Nations on Nov 4, 2019, which took one year to take effect.

The departure makes the United States the only country of 197 signatories to have withdrawn from the agreement, hashed out in 2015.

Current and former climate diplomats said the task of curbing global warming to safe levels would be tougher without the financial and diplomatic might of the United States.

European and US investors with a collective \$30 trillion in assets on Wednesday urged the country to quickly rejoin the Paris Agreement, and warned that the country risked falling behind in the global race to build a low-carbon economy.

World holds its breath

As US polls result delayed, world leaders decide not to draw line too soon

REUTERS, London/Lagos/Sarajevo

A day after Americans voted in a bitterly contested election, the rest of the world was none the wiser yesterday, with millions of votes still to count, the race too close to call and a mounting risk of days or even weeks of legal uncertainty.

Donald Trump's pre-emptive declaration of victory at the White House was condemned by some US political commentators and civil rights groups, who warned about the trampling of long-standing democratic norms.

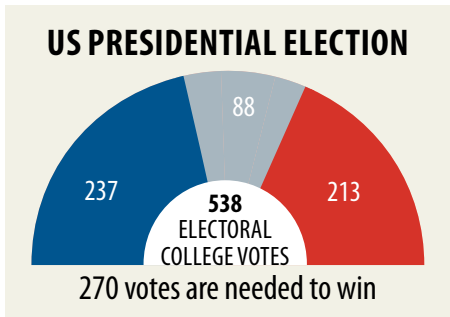
Most world leaders and foreign ministers sat on their hands, trying not to add any fuel to the electoral fire.

"Let's wait and see what the outcome is," said British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab. "There's obviously a significant amount of uncertainty. It's much closer than I think many had expected."

But while Raab and others urged caution, the Slovenian prime minister broke ranks, congratulating Trump and the Republican party via Twitter.

"It's pretty clear that American people have elected @realDonaldTrump and @Mike_Pence for #4moreyears," wrote Janez Jansa, one of several east European leaders, including Hungary's Viktor Orban, who are fervent Trump allies.

The latest vote tally showed Democrat



challenger Joe Biden with a lead in the Electoral College - 224 votes to 213, with 270 needed for victory - but with counting still be completed in at least five major 'battleground' states: Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, North Carolina and Georgia.

On Twitter, the hashtags #Trump, #Biden and #USElections2020 were trending from Russia to Pakistan, Malaysia to Kenya and across Europe and Latin America, underscoring how much every region of the world sees the outcome as pivotal.

In Russia, which US intelligence agencies have accused of trying to interfere in the election, there was no official reaction.

In Australia, crowds watched the results roll in while drinking beer in an American bar in Sydney. Some supported Trump,

while others were quick to underline the ramifications of the US vote worldwide.

"I think it affects us all, what happens over there really matters for the next four years over here," said Sydney resident Luke Heinrich.

China said the election was a domestic affair and it had "no position on it". Chinese social media users, however, were quick to mock the failure of the US electoral system to deliver a quick and clear result. "Whether he wins or loses, his final mission is to destroy the appearance of American democracy," one user on China's Twitter-like Weibo platform wrote on Wednesday. "Let Trump be re-elected and take the US downhill," another wrote.

In Nigeria, one leading politician, Senator Shehu Sani, said the uncertainty in the United States was reminiscent of Africa.

"Africa used to learn American democracy, America is now learning African democracy," he tweeted to his 1.6 million followers.

In Iran, President Hassan Rouhani said the result of the US election was not important for the country's clerical rulers, but that the next president in Washington should respect international treaties and laws.

"For Tehran, the next US administration's policies are important and not who wins the US election," Rouhani said.

NEWS IN BRIEF



Top Indian news anchor Arnab Goswami arrested

One of India's top TV news anchors, Arnab Goswami, was arrested by police in Mumbai yesterday for alleged abetment of suicide in a case registered in 2018, his channel said in a statement. According to local media, the case related to the suicide of an interior designer who said he was owed money by Goswami's Republic TV. Republic showed footage of more than a dozen police officers entering Goswami's house and taking him away in a van. Republic, in the statement, said Goswami and his son were physically assaulted by the police and access to his legal team was denied. Goswami, known for chairing chaotic prime-time debates and widely seen as supportive of the BJP, has been in a tussle with the police in opposition-ruled Maharashtra this year.

US approves sale of armed MQ-9 Reaper drones to Taiwan

The United States has agreed to sell four armed MQ-9 Reaper drones to Taiwan, the State Department announced Tuesday, helping to boost the island's defenses as China steps up its threats. The \$600 million sale aids Taiwan's "continuing efforts to modernize its armed forces and to maintain a credible defensive capability," the State Department said. It will also assist in maintaining political stability and the military balance in the region, the department said in a statement. The sale covers four drones, ground stations, and associated surveillance and communications equipment, but not the bombs or missiles usually associated with it. The drones deal comes on the heel of several other major arms packages to Taiwan announced in recent weeks worth \$4.2 billion, including potent Harpoon anti-ship missiles, air-launched SLAM-ER cruise missiles, air reconnaissance technology and mobile light rocket launchers.

US postal service fails to complete sweep for ballots

The US Postal Service told a judge it could not complete his order to sweep mail processing facilities on Tuesday afternoon for delayed election ballots and immediately dispatch any for delivery in about a dozen states, including closely fought battlegrounds Pennsylvania and Florida. USPS data showed as of Sunday about 300,000 ballots that were received for mail processing did not have scans confirming their delivery to election authorities. While ballots may be delivered without scans, voting rights groups fear mail delays could cause at least some of those votes to be disqualified. US District Judge Emmet Sullivan on Tuesday had ordered the sweep in response to lawsuits by groups and Latino community advocates.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

Bettors stampede back in favour of Joe Biden

REUTERS, London

Democratic candidate Joe Biden was back as clear favorite to win the US presidential election in online betting markets yesterday, a reversal of fortune for President Donald Trump who had been favored overnight.

The shift, according to data from three odds aggregators, came after Biden overtook Trump in the battleground state of Wisconsin, with an estimated 89% of the vote tallied there.

British-based Smarkets exchange was giving Biden a 78% chance, while New Zealand-based predictions market PredictIt had Biden at nearly 80%. Trump's chances on Smarkets were sitting at 21% - a massive drop from nearly 80% overnight.

"Taking the lead in Wisconsin could be the turning point with the Democrat now also projected to win Nevada and Arizona, which would likely give him the 270 electoral college votes he needs for victory," Betfair spokesperson Sam Rosbottom said. Bettors on Betfair were giving Biden a 66% chance to win by breakfast time on the East Coast.

Trump earlier falsely claimed victory over Biden with millions of votes still uncounted. Biden, meanwhile, was pinning his hopes on the so-called "blue wall" states of Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania that sent Trump to the White House in 2016, although they could take hours or days to finish counting.

The 2020 election is shaping up to be the biggest betting event of all time, betting companies say, with one player on Monday placing a record-breaking bet of one million British pounds (\$1.3 million) on a victory for Biden. Betfair Exchange said a record 425 million pounds has been bet on the outcome of the winner so far -- more than double that of 2016. It accepts bets right up until the result is announced.

Biden had been favored before election day, but his chances according to oddsmakers plunged to less than one-in-three overnight, after Trump pushed ahead in the swing state of Florida.

Trump gains with Latinos, loses some white voters: exit polls

REUTERS

As the US presidential race remained undecided, President Donald Trump showed some surprising gains with Latino and other nonwhite voters, but they may have been offset by losses among those who supported him four years ago, according to exit polls conducted by Edison Research.

Trump won both Florida and Texas over Democratic opponent Joe Biden in part because of newfound support from Latino voters.

In Florida, according to exit polls, Trump and Biden split the Latino vote. In 2016, Trump only won four out of 10 Latino voters in his race against Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton. Overall, he was winning three of 10 nonwhite voters versus winning just two of 10 four years ago. Trump maintained his advantage among white voters in Florida. According to Edison Research exit polls, six in 10 white voters said they cast ballots for Trump, unchanged from 2016.

The Trump campaign made winning over Cuban-American voters in populous South Florida a top priority by emphasizing the administration's

hardline policy toward Cuba and Venezuela, and branding Biden and Democrats "socialists" in the manner of those countries' regimes.

In Texas, four in 10 Hispanics voted for Trump, up from three in 10 in 2016, according to exit polls in that state. Edison's national exit poll showed



that while Biden led Trump among nonwhite voters, Trump had received a slightly higher proportion of the nonwhite vote than he did in 2016.

The poll showed that about 11% of African Americans, 31% of Hispanics and 30% of Asian Americans voted for Trump, up 3 percentage points from 2016 among all three groups.

The Republican president appears to have lost some support among white men and some older voters in

Georgia, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, according to Edison polls.

While Trump is still winning the majority of those voters, some of them switched to supporting Biden, the exit polls showed. Edison's polls showed Trump winning seven in 10 white men in Georgia, down from an eight-in-10 advantage over Clinton in 2016. While Trump is winning six in 10 voters who are at least 65 years old in Georgia, that was down from seven in 10 four years ago.

According to the exit poll, Trump appears to have lost support in Pennsylvania, a state that could determine the election, among white men, college-educated voters and people younger than 44. The poll found that 61% of white men backed Trump's bid for re-election, down 3 points from 2016. Forty percent of college graduates voted for Trump, down 5 points from four years ago, and 33% of voters between 18 and 44 backed Trump in the state, down 9 points from 2016.

Trump did win 56% of Pennsylvania voters who are at least 45 years old, which is 3 points higher than 2016.



A Trump supporter (L) clashes with a demonstrator at Black Lives Matter plaza across from the White House on election day in Washington, DC. Despite fears of violence, a handful of incidents stood out on an otherwise mostly tranquil election day as Republican President Donald Trump battled for a second term against Democratic challenger Joe Biden.

PHOTO: AFP

Myanmar govt, army chief clash ahead of Nov 8 polls

REUTERS, Yangon

The Myanmar President Office yesterday hit back at the army chief for criticising the government's handling of an upcoming general election, warning that his remarks risked creating fear and unrest, just days away from the vote.

Military commander-in-chief Min Aung Hlaing in a rare interview on Tuesday said the government was making "unacceptable mistakes" in the run-up to Sunday's pivotal ballot, which would be Myanmar's second democratic vote since the end of nearly five decades of army rule.

It was his second warning in as many days about potential bias in the election, remarks that President Office spokesman Zaw Htay said were based on "uncertain words" of others.

"It is not helpful to having a free and fair election but will encourage unrest and concerns," Zaw Htay told a news conference.

Min Aung Hlaing had told the Popular News Journal that the military, as the "guardian" of the country, was watching election preparations closely.

He said opposition parties had complained about irregularities, including voter lists that were incomplete and riddled with errors. He made similar comments on Monday in a military statement that accused the election commission of "widespread violation of the laws and procedures of the pre-voting process".

The election commission could not be reached for comment.

The commission is controlled by the government of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, which has been at odds with the military on numerous issues in recent months, including reform of the constitution that was drafted by the military before it ceded power. That constitution enshrines significant powers for the military and its control of several key ministries, including Home Affairs.

Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy is widely expected to win Sunday's vote. In a Facebook post late on Tuesday, she called for calm and urged voters not to be intimidated.

US ELECTION 2020

WHAT WE KNOW

The scenario many had feared has come true: November 3 has come and gone and we don't know whether Trump or Joe Biden has won the White House. Here's the current state of play and a preview of what to expect.

WHAT RESULTS REMAIN?

As it stands, Biden has won 227 electoral votes and Trump a maximum of 213, based on the states they've so far won. The Democrat was boosted by the addition of Arizona in the early hours of yesterday morning -- as the two men try to eke their way to the magic number of 270 out of a total of 538. We are still not counting Arizona in as vote counting is going on there. That leaves the battlegrounds Georgia, Michigan, North Carolina, Pennsylvania up in the air -- as well as the easier to predict states of Alaska (Republican) and Nevada (Democratic).

WHEN WILL WE FIND OUT?

Officials in many of the states have indicated how long it will take to count the ballots, with the situation complicated this year by the Covid-19 pandemic that has led to record mail-in voting. Georgia, Michigan and Wisconsin, have all indicated a final picture could emerge later yesterday. Pennsylvania has said it could take up to November 6, while in North Carolina mail ballots postmarked election day are accepted until November 12.

WHAT CAN HAPPEN NEXT?

While Biden has voiced confidence in his chances, President Trump has gone a step further, already claiming victory and saying he'll go to the Supreme Court to get his way. The Republican said in a White House speech that "we want all voting to stop," apparently meaning that he wants to stop the counting of mail-in ballots which can be legally accepted by state election boards after Tuesday's election. Democrats are widely thought to have cast more mail-in ballots than Trump's supporters and Republicans have already signaled they'll pursue an aggressive strategy in Pennsylvania to have the votes that arrived after the election thrown out. The state's Democratic governor shot back, tweeting that there were a million votes left to count. The state's top court ordered a three-day extension which the US Supreme Court refused to block, but said it could revisit the issue after the election -- and the ascension of new conservative judge Amy Coney Barrett could prove decisive in that decision.

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Facebook and Twitter flagged some of Trump's posts on the US election as votes were still being counted, in a real-time test of their rules on handling misinformation and premature claims of victory.

Fox News faced criticism from Trump's campaign and its allies on Tuesday for projecting that Arizona's 11 electoral votes would go to Biden, as other news networks sought more evidence before making a call.

SOURCE: AFP