

Peres elected Israeli president

by UPI

TEL AVIV, Israel - The Israeli Knesset Wednesday elected Shimon Peres to the mostly ceremonial post of president, pushing the scandal-tainted tenure of Moshe Katsav behind it.

The 83-year-old former prime minister received 86 of 120 votes in a second round of secret balloting by the members of the Israeli Parliament after two other candidates withdrew, Voice of America reported. He will be sworn in July 15 to a seven-year term as Israel's ninth president.

Peres has twice served as prime minister in a caretaker capacity but has never won a national election. He also has served in several other top positions in the Israeli government and shared a Nobel Peace Prize with Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat for helping to hammer out the 1993 peace agreement that led to limited Palestinian self-rule.

Katsav has not been formally charged but has been accused of rape and abuse of power based on statements by several women who worked in his office. He maintains he is innocent but stepped down several months ago.

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