

JACOB PALIS: A Global Leader in SCIENCE DIPLOMACY

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Jacob Palis is, not only, one of the most renowned mathematicians in the world, but also one of the greatest promoters of Science Diplomacy and its benefits to the Developing World. Science Diplomacy as a facilitator of international and regional collaboration in scientific research and education is best practiced by academies of science, such as TWAS, and international centers of excellence, such as ICTP and IMPA. In all these institutions, the contributions of Jacob Palis to diplomacy for science are truly outstanding and admirable.

Palis has been closely linked to TWAS ever since its formative years. He was one of the first mathematicians to be awarded the TWAS prize in mathematics and to be elected as TWAS Fellow. He later received the Illy-TWAS prize in mathematics and the Abdus Salam Medal for Science and Technology. All of which are prestigious prizes awarded only to the most outstanding in the field.

He served TWAS with great dedication and distinction, first as Member of the Council, then as Secretary General, Vice President and finally as President. His term as President lasted from 2005 to 2012 during which many achievements can be attributed to Jacob's dedication and guidance.

Palis's legacy as President of TWAS lies in the substantial expansion of the Academy's South-South and North-South programs in ways that enabled it to become a truly global player in science diplomacy. It is only befitting that the Academy at the conclusion of Palis' tenure elected to change its name from the Academy of Sciences for the Developing World, which it had adopted in 2004, to The World Academy of Sciences.

During Palis' tenure, the Academy's South-South fellowship programs witnessed substantial expansion. TWAS currently offers more than 500 postgraduate fellowships each year, making it the largest fellowship program of its kind in the world, and one of the best examples of South-South diplomacy for science initiatives.

Participating countries, including Brazil, China, India, Malaysia, Mexico, and South Africa, cover all local expenses for the students hosted by them, costing these countries a minimum of 20 million dollars per year.

Palis also used his diplomatic skills to expand financial contributions to TWAS programs and endowment fund, especially from Brazil and other Latin American countries.

Under Palis' leadership, TWAS regional offices also began to assume greater responsibilities for the Academy's activities, marking the first significant moves toward decentralization. These offices, with financial support from TWAS, now help to identify promising young scientists within their region for potential selection as TWAS Affiliates. They also organize regional conferences for young scientists and engage in discussions about policy issues of importance to the region.