

Katonah's Marwell meets Obama in India

By JOHN ROCHE

People all over the political spectrum would likely agree that President Barack Obama has his hands full these days. Perhaps that's what made it even more impressive that the nation's president specifically recognized the work of Curtis Instruments Inc. as he shook hands with the locally based company's CEO, Stuart Marwell.

"I have been reading about your company," Mr. Obama told the top executive of Curtis Instruments. "You are doing good work."

The president's congratulatory remarks to Mr. Marwell about Curtis Instruments came at the end of a small roundtable discussion that Mr. Obama hosted on Nov. 6 during his trip to Mumbai for the U.S.-India Business and Entrepreneurship Summit. Mr. Marwell and seven other CEOs from the U.S. and India were invited to the roundtable, which focused on beneficial technologies, business relationships and cooperative efforts between the two countries.

"It was an exciting opportunity, and quite a fascinating experience," said Mr. Marwell, a resident of Katonah.

The panel discussion with Mr. Obama and the select group of CEOs was "intimate, interesting and productive," according to Mr. Marwell, the president and CEO of Curtis, a global technology company based in Mount Kisco specializing in electric vehicle instrumentation and controls.

"What was nice about it was that it was very informal, and the president and everyone else at the table were very interested and engaged in the discussion," Mr. Marwell said. "It was a very relaxed and open atmosphere, and because it wasn't open to the press, you could speak your mind. After we each made our prepared remarks about our businesses, the president encouraged us to share our ideas and opinions, which really made it unique."

During the roundtable held at the Trident Nariman Point Hotel in India's commercial capital, Mr. Marwell said the president, who served as moderator of the discussion, showed interest and excitement about the prospects of an electric car, called the Reva, being produced by the Mumbai-based automotive company Mahindra & Mahindra through a partnership with Curtis Instruments.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of Curtis, a family-owned company that over the past half century has provided technology for NASA's Apollo missions and experiments aboard the MIR space station, as well as for hybrid, electric and other alternative vehicles. Through its innovations in power conversion, motor control, battery management and instrumentation, Curtis is recognized as a leader



PHOTO COURTESY CURTIS INSTRUMENTS

Katonah resident Stuart Marwell, president and CEO of Curtis Instruments, takes part in a roundtable discussion Nov. 6 with President Barack Obama and a select group of other CEOs from the U.S. and India during Mr. Obama's trip to Mumbai.

in the technology powering the development of electric vehicles.

Each of the CEOs represented a cooperative technical and business alliance between Indian and American corporations. Much of the roundtable discussion centered on technologies that have a positive effect on public health and quality of life, said Mr. Marwell, who was accompanied on the panel by Anand Mahindra, vice chairperson of Mahindra & Mahindra, Ltd., the parent company of Mahindra-Reva, the leading electric car company in India.

"There was certainly an environmental aspect to this roundtable, so the CEOs invited were from companies involved with clean transportation, clean water, solar energy and medical research," Mr. Marwell said.

During the panel discussion, Mr. Mahindra spoke of the development of electric vehicles and the unique 15-year-old relationship between Mahindra-Reva and Curtis, which has been active in the electric vehicle technology field for decades.

Instruments developed and produced by Curtis were used on the most groundbreaking and well-known electric vehicle to date, the lunar roving vehicle driven during the Apollo moon landings. But Mr. Marwell said there is a significant difference be-

tween the space race between countries and the ongoing effort to protect and preserve the environment around the globe.

"Curtis played a role in the space race, which was one of the great moments of technological innovation of the 20th century," Mr. Marwell said. "And today, we're part of the climate change solution, the greatest technological challenge of the 21st century. But while the race to the moon was marked by competition between nations, the climate change challenge will require cooperation between nations."

Mr. Obama mentioned the electrification of vehicles in India in two of his keynote speeches several times, and specifically referred to how the companies involved in the electric vehicle field create jobs in both nations.

Vidyadhar Humnabadkar, managing director of Curtis's operations in India, said that Curtis's relationship with Mahindra & Mahindra and Mahindra-Reva continues to grow and expand.

Mr. Marwell said there is tremendous potential for electric vehicles around the world, including India's metropolitan regions; where the volume of traffic is escalating as rapidly as the rising demand for cleaner energy and cost savings on the part of drivers and the Indian government.

Curtis is recognized as a leader in the technology powering the development of electric vehicles.

Mr. Obama said a key goal of his trip to India was to boost the economy and create jobs back home, and Mr. Marwell said that he agrees that corporate alliances like the one between Curtis and Mahindra-Reva can go a long way toward that goal.

"Another focus of the roundtable and certainly at least in part of the president's participation in the broader summit was to highlight that there are already successful, long-term relationships in place between India and the United States, which amount to a win-win for both countries for a number of reasons," Mr. Marwell said. "For Curtis, the business we do in India translates into supporting about 350 jobs at our manufacturing facilities in Puerto Rico, plus engineering and management jobs in California and right here in Mount Kisco. So that's a real success and amounts to many, many Americans having jobs."

Although the economic stimulus package crafted by the Obama administration was widely criticized by Republicans and others during this fall's election season, Mr. Marwell disagreed with the criticism of stimulus funds as wasteful government spending — a point he shared with the president during the roundtable.

"The federal stimulus was actually a huge help for our company, because one of the elements of that plan provided tax credits for Americans buying electric vehicles," Mr. Marwell said. "When that kicked in, it had a huge, positive impact for Curtis, and other U.S. companies agreed with that point."