



90-hour work week debate: Devina Mehra's 5 reasons why it's 'bunkum,' when KP Singh said play hard too and more

90 hour work debate: In an exclusive interaction with CNBC-TV18, Bajaj Auto's Rajiv Bajaj said, he believes that the number of hours of work doesn't matter any more, the quality of work does. "Let the 90-hour work week start from the top and if it happens to be productive, it should be implemented widely."

By [Kanishka Sarkar](#)

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“All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy” — we all learnt this in school but two years after the COVID-19 pandemic, when the significance accorded to work-life balance peaked, corporate India continues to remain divided.

Whether it is Infosys co-founder NR Narayana Murthy who called for youngsters working 70 hours a week or Larsen & Toubro (L&T) Chairman SN Subrahmanyan who has defended his 90-hour work week statement, their ideology found more critics than supporters.

While two have cited the example of progress in Japan on the back of long working hours, critics have hit back saying the “birth rates” there have plummeted to far below replacement levels.

Defending L&T chairman’s viral clip, saying “[I regret I am not able to make you work on Sundays](#)... What do you do sitting at home? How long can you stare at your wife?”, a company spokesperson said extraordinary outcomes require extraordinary effort.

In December 2024, Infosys’ Murthy had said he doesn't believe in work-life balance and that he was a bit disappointed when, back in 1986, companies moved from a six-day work week to a five-day work week.

But do all India Inc leaders agree?

95-year-old **KP Singh, Chairman Emeritus of DLF**, in an earlier interview with CNBC-TV18 had said, he dedicates a lot of time and energy in having a life outside of work, he works hard but he also plays equally hard. He remembered how he would often dance the night away with his wife Indira at the most happening nightclub in town Tabela at The Oberoi.

“I still do it. In London and In south of France, I'm very fond of social life. My life is a relationship. How do I build a relationship? My late wife was always two steps ahead of me. In a partnership, if one person is behind, you can't do it. So we used to go out together,” he said, adding that he still dances.

In an exclusive interaction with CNBC-TV18 on January 10, **Bajaj Auto MD Rajiv Bajaj** said he believes that the number of hours of work doesn't matter any more, the quality of work does.

Reacting to the 90-hour work debate, he said the role of senior leadership is to create an enabling environment and that most employees anyway do over 12 hours if one adds the commute time to it.

“I can work while having my morning tea, while doing yoga.

[Let the 90-hour work week start from the top](#) and if it happens to be productive, it should be implemented widely.”

He believes debating the 'number of hours worked' without context is one-dimensional; qualitative aspects of work are more important than quantity.

Harsh Goenka, Chairperson of the RPG Group, posted on X “Why not rename Sunday to ‘Sun-duty’ and make ‘day off’ a mythical concept! Working hard and smart is what I believe in, but turning life into a perpetual office shift? That’s a recipe for burnout, not success. Work-life balance isn’t optional, it’s essential.”

First Global founder and chairperson Devina Mehra also wrote a long post about how L&T chairman’s 90 hour work week comment not only implies that he “hates the thought that they (employees) have any life at all outside work” but also how the practice would reduce female workforce participation.

She cited five reasons why the 90 hour work week “recommendation is bunkum and makes absolutely no sense”

“1. Research shows increasing the number of hours of work beyond a point (and certainly that point is far before 90 hours) reduces productivity substantially. The human mind (or body) is simply not capable of focused, good quality work for that long - at least on a regular basis. Not to speak of the toll it takes on physical and mental health.

2. Most people including the person making this recommendation have families, including children. This type of working hours recommendation assumes that the man (it is almost always the man) who is working around the clock while his wife is taking care of the home and children. This was very starkly visible also from this book on Mr Narayan Murthy and Mrs Sudha Murthy that I read recently.

3. More important, all data shows that no country has moved from low income to middle income without very substantial participation of women in the workforce. So, if the aim is to build the country and its economy, we need to attract more women to the workforce, not less.

4. The social fallout of this culture in Korea & Japan which required people to hang around the workplace all day every day is that the women in those countries decided the sensible route was not to get married at all and the birth rates in those countries have plummeted to far below replacement levels.

5. Having said all of this, while I do not believe in long hours in office necessarily, the fact is that if you want to really be skilled in something like equity research or any other real knowledge area you need to put in those 10000 hours of work to really learn the skill.”

<https://tinyurl.com/yr3hvp6p>



Actors and sports personalities including **Deepika Padukone and Jwala Gutta** also voiced strong disapproval of Subrahmanyan's stance on employee work-life balance, particularly his suggestion that working on Sundays should be mandatory.

Swiggy Food and Marketplace CEO Rohit Kapoor had also earlier said that hustle culture is a misguided approach. He is of the view that working late into the night at the expense of one's health and personal relationships is counterproductive. “But wo jo 3 baje raat ko baithte hai na wo ye nahi batate ki wo 1 baje dopahar ko office ate hai (Those who say they work till 3 am, never say that they reach the office by 1 pm next day),” he said last year.