

## Devina Mehra pans Nilesch Shah's 84-hour workweek idea as 'bunkum'— 'reduces productivity', damages 'family dynamics'

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*Devina Mehra slams Nilesch Shah's suggestion of an 84-hour workweek for nation-building, calling it impractical and harmful. Excessive work hours reduce productivity, damage physical and mental health, and negatively affect family dynamics, particularly for women, she says.*



Devina Mehra criticises Nilesch Shah's proposal for an 84-hour workweek, emphasising its negative impact on productivity, health, and gender equality.

Devina Mehra, Founder and Chairperson of First Global, categorically dismissed [Kotak AMC](#) CEO Nilesch Shah's suggestion of working 84 hours a week for nation-building, calling it "impractical and counterproductive". She highlighted research showing that excessive work hours reduce productivity and harm physical and mental health. She also pointed out the negative impact on family dynamics, particularly for women, and argued that sustainable economic growth requires greater female workforce participation. Additionally, she noted that while skill mastery requires dedication, it doesn't necessitate extended office hours.

Shah has said in a podcast that one generation of Indians needs to put in a few extra hours as [Koreans](#), Japanese, and [Chinese](#) do so that India grows at a faster pace. They work for 12 hours a day every day, every month and every year.

### [Here's what Mehra posted on X](#)

Devina Mehra, a market veteran, rejected the idea. In a tweet on X, she wrote:

Let me say this as politely as I possibly can.

This type of recommendation of working 84 hours a week for 'nation-building' is bunkum and makes absolutely no sense.

1. Research shows that increasing the number of hours of work beyond a point (and certainly that point is far before 84 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.

Anecdotally, I remember from my days in [Citibank](#) which had a late working culture (barring exceptions like Aditya Puri who always left at 5:30 sharp ☺), many officers would while away time, say from 3 to 6:00 p.m., and then get back to work again to show their bosses that they were at the desks till 8:30 or 9:00.

It was a dysfunctional work culture and one that I steered clear of when I became an entrepreneur.

As an employer my focus has always been on output, rather than face time at work.

I have had very good colleagues who would try to leave by 6:00 p.m. everyday and still be productive; whereas others who stayed late, would while away time with frequent smoking breaks, talking to girlfriends etc.

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 means that most women would be precluded from this type of workplace and work culture; or at the very least, would have to give up dreams of having children (unless there's a social revolution and Indian men become somewhat equal partners in raising a family).

The women then can have a career OR a family with kids, a choice which Mr Shah did not have to make.

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 work force.

So, if the aim is to build the country and its economy, we need to attract more women to the workforce, not less.

Hence, the 84-hour week is not the prescription that will take the country to the next level.

This much is basic, but there is a deliberate blindness to this among even well-educated men!

4. The social fallout of this culture in Korea, in 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 10,000 hours of work to really learn the skill.

This means reading books, maybe doing courses from universities in your own time and so on. Without that you would not be at the cutting edge. So at the very least in the initial years you would need to put in the hours which may not be in office but on learning.

Let me know your thoughts in the comments.