well as the secretary of the Rural Development and Cooperatives Division.

The women police unit was launched with only six members in 1974. When Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Milee Biswas joined the force's cadre post in 1988, less than one percent of the total police force was comprised of women. However, over the years, more and more women joined the force, increasing the number to 6000. Even now, women make up a barely significant four percent of the police force, but we can see the change taking place and it's all thanks to pioneers such as Milee Biswas.

When she decided to join the cadre after completing her education, some of her family members were sceptical that she would successfully be able to complete her training. But she has proved to every sceptic that gender is not important to make it big in any profession; all one needs is perseverance and commitment to one's job.

"If you want to serve your nation, there is no better way to do that than joining the public services," says Milee. "Even though there were very few women joining the police force at my time, I felt enthusiastic about it and felt like I could do a good job if given a chance."

Jesmin Tuli, Joint Secretary of the Election Commission Secretariat, was always interested in joining the electoral system. Her decision was further reinforced when she noticed the lack of women working for the Election Commission. Thus, even though she was a student of Chemistry, Jesmin took the BCS exams and then sat for a separate exam conducted by the Election Commission, before joining the department in 1984. In her thirty years at the commission, Jesmin has witnessed several evolutionary changes of the electoral system of the country.

"Many other girls joined the commission along with me back in 1984 but due to various reasons the numbers kept dwindling till there were only two of us left from that batch," says Jesmin.

It was not that the said women left their jobs because they were incapable or didn't want to work anymore, says Jesmin. In fact, most of them left their job at the election commission to take up jobs elsewhere and are currently doing quite well for themselves, she adds.

More often than not, women are constricted by insensitive attitudes and lack of opportunities at their workplace, she adds. "If the society around them was more positive, women could have achieved higher goals," says Jesmin.



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Saida Muna Tasneem

> "A woman needs to have three times the energy of a man."

Saida Muna Tasneem echoes Jesmin's sentiment, adding that the civil service works like a pyramid, with more women recruited at the base but very few women employed at the top. Women are always kept at the fringes while stereotypical mindsets decide what jobs would "suit" a woman more.

"Women are placed in ministries which look over 'soft issues'. Why can't we see a