woman as the defence secretary of the country? Why can't a woman be the finance secretary? Why can't you make the principal secretary to the Prime Minister a woman? Are you saying that there are no capable women who can undertake such responsibilities? I am sure there are, but there's a lack of interest in pulling them up to decision making posts," she adds.



Milee Biswas

> "If you want to serve your nation, there is no better way to do that than joining the public services."

The handicap for a woman is that she is a woman. Thus, she can't or isn't given the opportunity to communicate as frequently or as intimately with her male boss as her male colleagues, says Saida. She is supported in her statement by Rokeya Sultana who says that less frequent communication with upper level male colleagues or superiors can be an impediment to a woman's growth in the civil services.

"Women need to fulfil many other obligations and so they tend to complete all their office duty on time and then leave for home. Men, on the other hand, have more time to strengthen their network by being in touch with their co-workers and male bosses," adds Rokeya.

Women also have to face problems when they seek maternity leave. Even after their child is born, women are forced to leave them in the care of some other person for a lack of day care centres at their workplace.

"When I joined the Bangladesh Bank, we would get three months maternity leave. That was one of the biggest challenges faced by the working women of the 1980s. Thankfully, at present women get six months maternity leave if they are working for the civil services," says Nazneen Sultana.

The common belief that women cannot perform well at higher ranks also creates obstructions for a woman's growth in the public service, says Nazneen. This creates a feeling of insecurity within women themselves, and they are made to feel inadequate about themselves.

High Ranking Women in Civil Services When Compared to Men

This list shows the number of women in high ranking positions at the Civil Services as of 2014.

- Total Number of Joint Secretaries: 923
  Female Joint Secretaries: 110
- Total Number of Additional Secretaries: 293
  Female Additional Secretaries: 24
- Total Number of Secretaries: 69
  Female Secretaries: 5

Source: (Website of Ministry of Public Administration, Public Administration Computer Centre. Last updated on March 3, 2014.)

"Women start believing that they can't perform at higher ranking positions as well as a man can because they are repeatedly told that by everyone around them. I believe that if you want to see more women in decision making posts, you need to change the way a woman views herself and her abilities. Only then will the society around her change," she adds.

A woman's perspective is more varied and encompassing than a man's way of looking at things, says Jesmin Tuli. And so the country will benefit if more women join the civil services, she says.

Women also generally tend to be less corrupt and more honest than their male counterparts, adds Rokeya Sultana. "Civil service is also not bereft of corruption. A woman's complete focus is on her work, as she is deter-