

the World Wildlife Foundation (WWF) recognises keeping and breeding of exotic birds in cages.

Had it not been for the bird breeders, the world would have known nothing or little about the existence of more than 300 types of lovebirds, Farhad says. "Today, only two types of lovebirds are found in the wild and hundreds of species have simply become extinct from the wild," he says.

"You may start breeding in a small cage anywhere at home and all it takes is a maximum time of 30 minutes a day," continued Farhad, "it is always preferable to buy, say, if you choose to buy Budgerigar, three months old chicks, with proper care in another three months' time the birds will start laying eggs."

Breeding of exotic birds could bring prosperity to anyone. Although the local markets are limited within the connoisseurs and in places like Katabon in Dhaka, more and more people are going into this legitimate business. Breeding can be so lucrative a business that if you present five pairs of Budgerigar to a poor girl of Class 4 in a village and teach her how to maintain them, she would not only be totally self-reliant within five years but also be able to



Some Budgerigar in Islam's cage.

pay for her higher studies and marriage, says Farhad.

Bulbul Ahmed, a photojournalist for *New Age* was inspired by the pioneer of exotic bird breeding in Bangladesh, late Matiar Rahman Sanu. Bulbul says that he and his wife look after the birds they have at home. "When we are with the birds I forget everything, there is no tension, no stress whatsoever, and both of us know we have a substantial income coming from them," Bulbul said.

Officials of the BCBBA say that the demand for exotic birds in the international market is very high but since it is a new domain, it has not taken proper shape in Bangladesh. The government is indifferent to it and cannot be convinced that this can also be a profitable industry. For instance, recently Prime Aviary, a local company applied for a loan of three crore taka from the Rajshahi Krishi Bank to set up a large exotic bird breeding farm in Sherpur, Bogra. The whole idea generated disbelief among the bank officials, who turned down the application terming it "absurd".

According to BCBBA officials, three years ago, a German pet shop wanted 500 pairs of lovebirds from Bangladesh every month over an indefinite period but all breeders combined could not fulfill the demand. Unless there is an



Shumi, Islam's daughter helps out in the business.