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Monkey loses selfie copyright dispute against man, thanks to US court

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A court in the US ruled on Monday, April 23, that a monkey who took a selfie on a wildlife photographer's camera doesn't own its copyright, drawing line in an issue which continued to be a sensation on the internet for quite a while, AFP reported.

The issue saw a prolonged legal tussle between British photographer David Slater and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) - the animal rights group which filed a suit on behalf of the monkey named Naruto.

It all began in 2011 when the monkey, a crested macaque approached a camera that Slater had put on the forested island of Sulawesi in Indonesia and pressed the button, taking its own photograph with a broad grin.

The picture then went viral and along with the fun element, it also became a subject of legal battle a few years after it happened.

In 2015, PETA filed a suit on behalf of the primate, claiming that Slater violated its copyright since the animal had clicked the photograph himself.

PETA's case was dismissed initially although the photographer had agreed last year to give 25 per cent of his earnings from the image to charities that worked on

the preservation of the macaque monkeys' habitats.

The animal rights' group then sought to withdraw the case but a US appeals court then stepped in, slamming PETA for giving up the case despite projecting itself as Naruto's "next friend" a legal term used on behalf of those who cannot represent their own cases. The court even accused PETA of using the monkey as an "unwitting pawn in its ideological goals".

However, even though the latest court ruling seems to have put the lid back on the bottle of controversy, it is yet to be deciphered why the monkey in the discussion is called Naruto.

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