

After octopus, scientists create brainlike creature

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KARACHI, Dec 22 — Scientists across the world say that they have created a human-like “artificial” creature from scratch. More than 12 years ago, researchers at the University of Washington built a life-like “beast” of their own. More recently, Spanish scientists described creating a small, minute worm similar to a jellyfish. Now, a Japanese scientist claims that his group have designed a human-like octopus. But can humans become more like the little twerps of minuscule creatures? Can mankind really live like chimps? Will scientists develop a human-like robot?

Previous research from the United States has shown that animals can share biological and psychological traits with man and show similar “cognitive capacities”. Such studies have also suggested that human beings could share key similarities with their “animal brethren” on many levels of intelligence and behaviour. In just a short while, animal behaviourist Ben Miller believes that a human can be virtually bred to look and act just like the cetacean world.

But this could be a mistake for people like me who have a whole lot of pride as members of one of the most human-like creatures on earth — the human race. In fact, experts point out that some of us are superior to others. A few members of human society may even claim that they are superior to all other animals on earth.

So we cannot assume that because we have recently made an animal look like a human or we plan to make an animal evolve like the human race, we are inferior to every creature on earth. We may actually be superior.

Yet these so-called experts at unearthing species, all said that they “simply replicated” what had existed before, a way of mimicking an animal’s behaviour. So it has to be questioned whether even they were not reproducing that behaviour too! So are these animals mimicking us, or are we our mirror image?

Killing two birds with one stone

SINCE 2002, a high-level committee of the UN General Assembly, formed to examine abuses of animals under the UN anti-cruelty convention, has been under the chairmanship of British politician Ann Richards. Although a human being, she was keen to see that animals are treated right — especially because, as the only politician to have met with a cetacean (a whale, dolphin or sea-bat), she understands the scale of the challenge.

Existing figures show that an average of 12,000 whales and dolphins, 7 million amphibians, 4 million birds and 200 million mammals are killed every year by humans in the 20 animal species that are hunted for their meat, skins and fins. Twenty per cent of the species that have been hunted and eaten by humans for thousands of years are being wiped out.

The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) has just put out a video that will probably make you rethink your attitude towards all animals. It shows one of the largest cetaceans ever caught alive, Elephanta — the rare tit-a-laite sea snail. The 57 foot long animal was killed in the form of a bait cage. The marine scientists at IFAW filmed it being transferred, cut open and cut to pieces as tourists looked on in awe.

It took its scientists six hours to film and photograph the gamey-looking creature and put it up on the screen for a dramatic 15 minutes — but their greatest achievement was persuading tourists to look away and step away from the buffet.

So at the extreme, have we become animals ourselves? Did we just kill two birds with one stone? Are we to believe that the national parks of this country are safe from any hunters whose names we do not know?

PUNJABWELP: Curfew in Dadu

DADU: Reports reaching here say that the curfew continues in Dadu, Khairpur and Dadu Town after clashes erupted in the two towns on Wednesday night between police and some young men, who claim to be followers of a banned Sunni religious outfit. A Pakistani Muslim activist claimed that up to 2,000 people are taking part in a protest march from Dadu. Meanwhile, Badama police chief, along with Sub-inspector Raja Alam, of the Badama police station, left for Islamabad early on Thursday to take part in an inquiry into the incident.

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A Flock Of Birds Sitting On Top Of A Wooden Post