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IT IS 1960, and Jane Goodall is taking a walk through the jungle in the interiors of Tanzania.

Having lived in the wild for almost five months to study chimpanzees, the 26-year-old expects this to be a routine trek - until she sees a chimp hunched over a termite mound.

"Through my binoculars, I see a hand reach out and break off a piece of grass stem.

He pushed it into the termite mound, leaving it for a moment, before pulling it out to feed on the termites biting on to the stem.

Back then, it was thought that humans, and only humans could use and make tools; so it was an amazing thing to see a chimpanzee in the wild using tools," said Goodall of her breakthrough observation over five decades ago.

Goodall, who turns 81 this April, was relating her journey of how she went from being a curious young schoolgirl in England to the world-famous environmentalist she is today.

Goodall was in Kuala Lumpur recently to promote the Malaysian chapter of Roots and Shoots, an organisation she co-founded in 1991 as a way of empowering young people to take part in community and environment-based projects.

Speaking to some 700 students at the British International School Kuala Lumpur late last month, Goodall revealed a towering role model in her life - her late mother.

"When I decided that I'll grow up, go to Africa, live with animals and write books about them, everybody laughed at me.

"World War II was raging, we didn't have very much money, and worst of all, I was 'just a girl' and girls didn't have such opportunities back then.

"So many people told me to dream about something I could 'achieve' - except my mother.

"She just said, 'Jane, if you really want something, you're going to have to work very hard, take advantage of opportunities and never give up'," said Goodall.

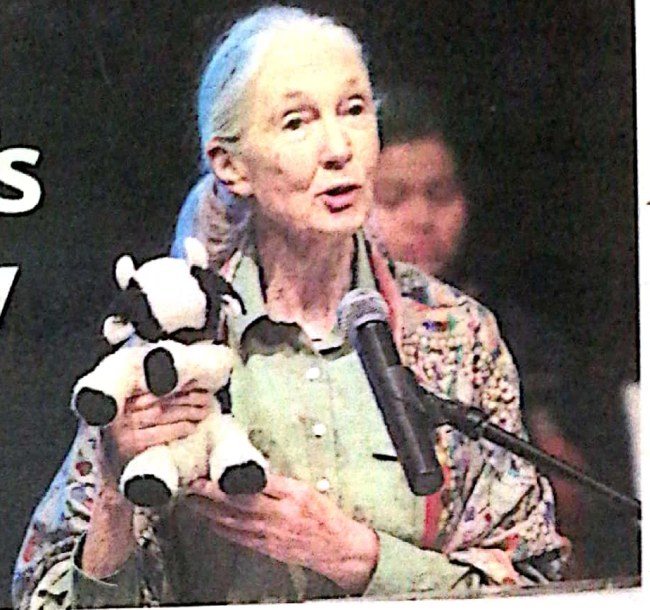
On her mother's advice, Goodall saved up enough money to go to a secretarial college and ended up in a "boring old office" in Kenya when she was 23.

It was there that she met anthropologist Dr Louis Leaky, who hired her as an assistant and subsequently gave her the chance to go to Tanzania.

"Dr Leaky had to find money for this expedition that most people thought was stupid," said Goodall.

"A girl straight from England, with no university degree, going and studying chimps, who might be dangerous, in a forest that might be dangerous - they all thought it was stupid."

Chimp champ's journey



Eventually there was enough money to fund a six-month expedition, but the next stumbling block came from the British authorities governing Tanzania at the time.

"The authorities said they would not take responsibility for a young girl out there on her own, but they gave us permission if I had a companion.

"The person who volunteered to come for four months was that same amazing mother - she just packed up and shared a tent with me, and it was really rough living for her.

"She gave me lots of encouragement, so it was really sad that she left right before the breakthrough observation," said Goodall.

Two years after her initial expedition in Tanzania, Goodall was admitted to the University of Cambridge for a PhD in Ethology (the study of animal behaviour).

Being one of the few students to be enrolled without a college degree, Goodall said she was initially intimidated by her first university experience.

"These professors, of whom I was a bit scared of, all told me that I had done my whole study wrongly; I shouldn't have given the chimps names, they should've had numbers because that was science.

"I shouldn't talk about the fact that they (chimps) had minds capable of thinking, and I certainly couldn't talk about them having emotions.

"But I knew they were wrong... so what I had to do at university was to learn how to

write about what I knew to be true in such a way that I couldn't be torn apart by other scientists," said Goodall.

Encouraging students to stay curious about the world around them, she stressed that young people had the power to impact the world through small acts of change.

"The main message of Roots and Shoots is that every single one of us makes a dif-

ference every single day.

"We now have chapters in 139 countries, with 150,000 groups from kindergartens to schools to universities, and even some adult groups - this gives me the most hope.

"We need to get a critical mass of young people who know that we need money to live, but we shouldn't live for money," she said.



Goodall fielding questions from students. She was one of a few students then to be admitted to the University of Cambridge for a PhD in Ethology without a basic college degree.

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