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'Sports best way to rehabilitate'

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"Sports is one of the best ways to rehabilitate an individual. With the right support and right system, one can perform very well in any sport of their choice," said Curtis McGrath, an Australian para canoeist who became a sportsman despite losing both legs while deployed by the Australian army in Afghanistan.

"A few minutes after I was being stretchered to the hospital, I joked with the boys of becoming a paralympian. And I did. I won gold at the Rio Paralympic games in canoeing," said Mr. Curtis, amidst applause. He was addressing students at the International Human Rights Day and International Day of Persons with Disabilities, held by the Department of Social Work at Stella Maris College.

Born in New Zealand, Curtis enlisted as combat engineer with the Australian Army when he was 18. In 2012, he was deployed as a search engineer in the Taliban-controlled areas in Afghanistan. It was on August 23 that year that his life changed forever, recalled Mr. Curtis. "I stepped on an Improvised Explosive Device, and lost both my legs and severely injured my left arm," said Mr. McGrath.

However, that did not stop him. He had begun thinking of what to do next, even while he was being taken away from the bomb site. "I had surgeries performed on me every 36 hours. It was a painful time, but I was determined to become a paralympian," he said.

He later took up canoeing, and after hard training, Mr. McGrath competed in the World Sprint Canoe Championship 2015 and came second.