

# DECCAN Chronicle

## Lucky Gagan lands London ticket

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For years their prime focus has been a single-minded pursuit to attain the magical timing. In sizzling heat and pouring rain they trained in search of Olympic glory. But attaining the qualifying mark has now turned out to be a curse for the four Indian swimmers — Sandeep Sejwal, Viradhawal Khade, Aaron D'Souza and Saurabh Sangvekar who broke through the 'B' mark.

World swimming governing body, FINA, in a letter to the Swimming Federation of India, has stated that at the end of the invitation procedure for swimmers having established Olympic selection time, none of the Indian swimmers are eligible for the Olympics as the 'B' standard timings didn't prove sufficient.

As a consolation, Bengaluru lad Gagan Ullalmath A.P's name was pulled out of the hat and figures among the 96 swimmers who have been handed an universality place by FINA. It is basically a participant ticket to the London Games.

Gagan has been awarded the slot in the 1500M event as he meets the criteria of having participated in the World Championships held in Shanghai last year.

None of the four qualified swimmers were considered for the universality place since according to FINA rules, a swimmer who has



**Gagan AP**

made the 'B' qualifier cannot be considered for the special slot.

Although the rule says that National Federations/NOCs with no swimmers who have achieved either standard entry time may enter one male and one female swimmer provided that those swimmers participated in the Shanghai event. FINA has decided to allot one slot for those countries, which had qualified swimmers (invitation time) but could not make the cut among the 181 invitation places specified according to timings.

This also means that countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka will get to field two swimmers, since they did not have qualified athletes in their ranks.

Such is the cruel twist of fate that while Gagan will board the London flight with a time of 15:59.33 minutes, 17-year-old Sangvekar, with a hugely better qualifying time of 15:34.67 minutes will be left to cope with depression and dejection of having missed out.