IOA-IOC row: IOC unhappy over election irregularities, shadow on India's 2036 Olympic bid

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13 November 2026: The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has expressed strong disappointment over alleged irregularities and disputes surrounding the Indian Olympic Association's (IOA) electoral process. It has asked the IOA and its Electoral Officer to ensure that elections are held in line with the Olympic Charter, the IOA Constitution and applicable rules, free of external interference, warning that the controversy is damaging the reputation of the Olympic Movement in India. IOA president P.T. Usha had written to IOC chief Kirsty Coventry on 9 November seeking an independent examination of the SOM election.

What is the SOM election dispute?

9 November results: In the women's category of the 'Sportspersons of Outstanding Merit' (SOM) election, P.T. Usha finished fifth with 40 votes; Anju Bobby George (53), Rani Rampal (50), Dola Banerjee (45) and Saina Nehwal (43) took the four seats.

Withdrawals: 13 candidates (8 men, 5 women) withdrew before the vote; Ashwini Nachappa and Ronjan Sodhi alleged external pressure. All four men's seats were filled unopposed.

Usha's complaints: Alleged campaigning by incumbent officials, WhatsApp messages soliciting votes for a panel, references to the Sports Ministry in a secret-ballot election, and the handling of four representations to the Electoral Officer. She says the complaint aims to protect the IOA's autonomy and electoral integrity, not to challenge her loss.

IOC's stance: It has voiced concern but has not adjudicated the specific allegations.

The IOA election calendar ahead

5 December 2026: Elections to the IOA Executive Council. Nominations are under scrutiny; P.T. Usha's nomination (as Ice Hockey Association of India representative) and those of more than a

dozen others have been challenged. The final electoral roll is due on 15 November.

Possible presidential contenders: Olympic medallists Gagan Narang, Saina Nehwal and Anju Bobby George are among the names discussed; former Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva (Archery Association of India) is also in the fray.

Implications for the 2036 Olympics bid

Sensitive timing: On 26 November 2026, an Indian delegation - P.T. Usha, Nita Ambani, Central and Gujarat government representatives and an athlete - will present India's case to the IOC's Future Host Commission. Ahmedabad is the proposed host city.

Competition: India submitted its expression of interest in October 2024; rival bidders are Qatar, Turkey, Germany, South Korea, Hungary and South Africa. The host is likely to be chosen in 2029.

Older concerns: In July 2025 the IOC had already flagged IOA governance, India's anti-doping record and past Olympic performance.

IOA and IOC at a glance

IOA (est. 1927): India's National Olympic Committee, recognised by the IOC; coordinates India's participation in the Olympics and other multi-sport events under the Olympic Charter.

IOC (est. 1894): Supreme authority of the Olympic Movement, founded by Pierre de Coubertin, headquartered in Lausanne, Switzerland; the Charter protects the autonomy and good governance of National Olympic Committees.

Quiz: Test your knowledge

Q1: Consider the following statements about the IOC: 1. It was established in 1894. 2. It is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. 3. It recognises National Olympic Committees. How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one(b) Only two(c) All three(d) None

Answer and explanation: (b) Statements 1 and 3 are correct. Statement 2 is wrong - the IOC is headquartered in Lausanne, Switzerland.

Q2: Which statement about India's 2036 Olympics bid is correct?

(a) India submitted its expression of interest in October 2024 and Ahmedabad is the proposed host city(b) The host city will be decided in 2026(c) India is the only competing country(d) The IOC has scrapped India's bid

Answer and explanation: (a) The host is likely to be decided in 2029; six other countries are also in the race.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

In short: The IOC has expressed disappointment over the IOA's election disputes; P.T. Usha has sought an independent examination of alleged irregularities in the SOM election. IOA elections are on 5 December, and India presents its 2036 bid on 26 November.

Question: What has the IOC asked of the IOA?

That elections be held in line with the Olympic Charter, the IOA Constitution and applicable rules, in a free and fair manner and without external interference.

Question: What happened in the SOM election?

P.T. Usha finished fifth in the women's category; 13 candidates withdrew amid allegations of external pressure, and Usha complained to the IOC about irregularities in the process.

Question: What is India's next 2036 Olympics date?

A presentation before the IOC's Future Host Commission on 26 November 2026; Ahmedabad is the proposed host city and a decision is likely by 2029.

Sources:

- Times of India: 'Very disappointed' - IOC backs call for clean IOA elections (13 November 2026)
- Indian Express: 'Disappointed' over IOA poll mess - IOC's wake-up call to India ahead of 2036 pitch (13 November 2026)

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