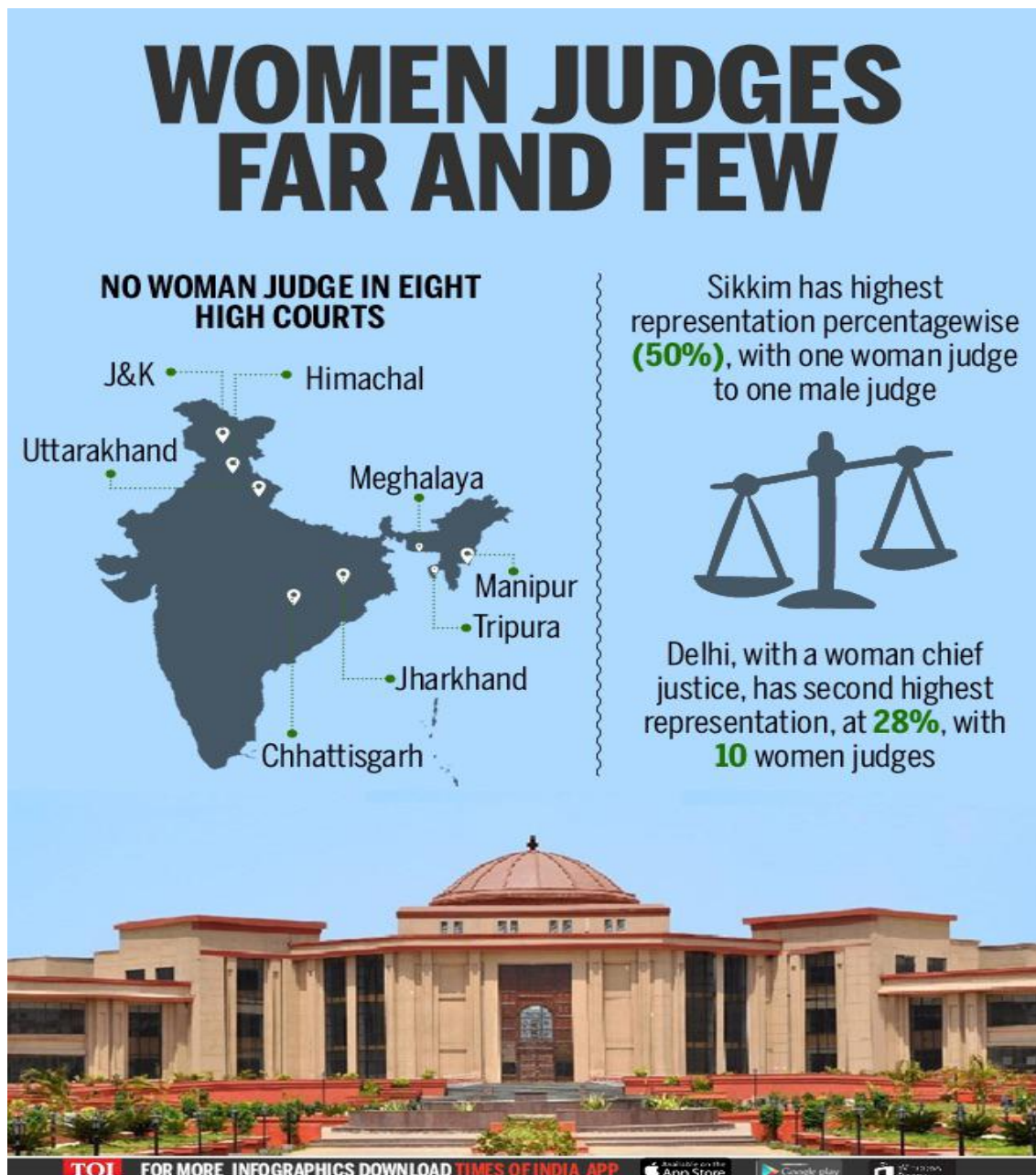


# The Times of India

## Women judges make up just 10% of HCs' strength

NEW DELHI: Indian judiciary remains a male bastion with women judges making up a little more than 10% of the current strength of high courts. There are only 61 women judges in 24 high courts as opposed to 534 male judges.

The sanctioned strength of high courts is 1,079 and the judiciary, which has the final word on judicial appointments, has a lot of work to do if vacancies are to be filled in a manner that closes this gap.



Eight HCs don't have a single woman judge. In the Supreme Court, there is only one woman judge out of the current bench strength of 28. The sanctioned strength is 31. This makes the ratio of women judges in the apex court less than a dismal 4%.

A list of 44 names recommended by the Allahabad high court collegium recently for appointment as judges has only two women candidates, making it clear that the trend isn't going to change any time soon.

Interestingly , the two HCs headed by women have the highest representation of women judges. Women make up 28% of all sitting judges in Delhi HC, headed by Chief Justice G Rohini. In Bombay HC, where a woman chief justice recently took over, 10 of the 64 judges are women. Four HCs have just one woman judge each while at least 17 out of 24 HCs have no women judges or their representation is less than three. The Sikkim HC, the smallest in the country , can claim parity where out of the two sitting judges, one is a woman. The HC has a sanctioned strength of three judges, including the chief justice.

For all appointments to HCs, the collegium of the HC concerned and the collegium of the Supreme Court are solely responsible. The HC collegium comprises the two seniormost judges of the HC and is headed by the chief justice.

Recommendations made by the HC collegium are sent to the SC collegium through the government which provides a security clearance. The SC collegium has the final word on appointment of all judges to HCs. Similarly , for all appointments to the SC, the SC collegium, headed by the CJI and comprising four senior-most judges, takes the final decision.

Also, the logjam between the government and the SC collegium over finalisation of the memorandum of procedure for appointment of judges to the apex court and HCs has worsened the vacancies situation.