

PRACTO TOLD TO MAKE ITS APP DISABLED-FRIENDLY

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Rights & Welfare of Persons with Disability including Mentally Ill People - Schemes & their Performance, Mechanisms, Laws Institutions and Bodies

The court of the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) on Wednesday ordered Practo, the online healthcare service provider, to make its website and app fully accessible for the disabled, affirming that legal requirements and guidelines on accessibility applied to private companies.

“This court recommends that Respondent No. 1, i.e. Practo Technologies Pvt. Ltd. shall comply with the government guidelines and shall make necessary modifications within 6 months and not later than 9 months from receiving the copy of this Recommendation-Order, to its app and other Information & Communication Technology platforms to make such platforms accessible for *divyangjan* (sic),” the order of Commissioner for PwD Upma Srivastava said.

The CCPD was hearing a complaint filed by a lawyer with 100% visual impairment, Rahul Bajaj, regarding the website and app being inaccessible and not in compliance with accessibility standards. He said the app’s home screen was unorganised and inaccessible with screen reading software, buttons were not labelled or had “nonsensical labels”.

Mr. Bajaj also said Practo was not in compliance with Section 46 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (PwD) Act, 2016, which sets a two-year timeline for service providers “whether government or private” to provide services in accordance with Central government accessibility rules.

Of enormous potential

The CCPD also recommended that the Director-General of Health Services under the Health Ministry should ensure that Practo was accessible for PwD.

Speaking to *The Hindu* on Friday, Mr. Bajaj, who is a co-founder of Mission Accessibility, said the order had enormous potential to change the lives of PwD. “The fight for digital accessibility is essentially for the disabled to be able to access products that others take for granted. It is not to be adversarial towards service providers, but rather to be solution-oriented,” he said.

A Practo spokesperson did not respond for request for comment as of writing on Friday evening. However, in an earlier response, it reaffirmed its commitment to making healthcare accessible and affordable for all.

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