

A sessions court here today declared former BJP MLA Nalin Kotadiya an absconder in the multi-crore [bitcoin](#) extortion case being probed by the state [Criminal Investigation Department](#) (CID-Crime).

Additional sessions [judge](#) P G Tamakuwala declared Kotadiya a "proclaimed offender" (absconder) under section 82 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC ) in response to an application by the CID, and asked him to appear before the court within 30 days.

The court had earlier issued an arrest warrant against Kotadiya after the CID moved the court saying he did not appear before the agency despite summoning, nor could he be traced during searches at his properties.

Several policemen, including a [Superintendent](#) of Police, have been arrested in the case so far.

As Kotadiya remained untraceable, even after the issuance of arrest warrant, the CID moved the court again, seeking that he should be declared a proclaimed offender.

The complainant in the case, Surat-based builder Shailesh Bhatt, had alleged that policemen from [Amreli](#) kidnapped him and his business partner [Kirit Paladia](#) from Gandhinagar on February 9 and extorted bitcoins worth Rs 9 crore owned by Paladia.

One of the accused forced them to transfer bitcoins -- a form of digital currency -- in his name, Bhatt had said and alleged that Kotadiya was also involved in the conspiracy.

Following the investigation, the CID registered a case of kidnapping and extortion against Kotadiya.

A former MLA of the ruling BJP from Dhari in [Amreli](#) district, Kotadiya did not contest the 2017 Assembly election. He is a [Patidar leader](#) and had openly supported Hardik Patel over the demand of reservation for the community.

He had also claimed to have voted against NDA candidate [Ram Nath Kovind](#) during the Presidential poll.

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