

# CLARIFY LEGALITY OF BITCOIN, SC TELLS GOVERNMENT

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The Supreme Court on Friday orally asked the Union government to clarify on the legality of the digital currency bitcoin.

A Bench led by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud was hearing a case related to the Gain bitcoin scam.

The question came in response to a submission by the Enforcement Directorate (ED), represented by Additional Solicitor-General Aishwarya Bhati, for the lifting of the stay on arrest of one of the accused, Ajay Bhardwaj, in the case.

The ED filed a status report in the case on July 30, 2021. Ms. Bhati said Bhardwaj had not cooperated in the investigation. She urged the court to lift the stay as the allegations involve the collection of 80,000 bitcoins, valued at approximately Rs. 20,000 crore. The court, however, extended the interim order to stay Bhardwaj's arrest till March 28, the next date of hearing, provided he cooperated fully in the investigation.

The court directed him to appear before the ED in two days. The Bench ordered Bhardwaj to "cooperate with the investigation by being present as and when called upon to do so".

The court asked the ED to file a fresh status report on or before March 25.

The ED had lodged a money laundering case against Ajay Bhardwaj and others on the basis of two FIRs, one at Pune and the other at Nanded. The police have alleged that Gain bitcoin, through a cryptocurrency investment scheme called 'GB21', duped investors by guaranteeing 10% monthly returns.

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