

Case Studies (2025) Q. 9

9. Subash is Secretary, PWD in the State Government. He is a senior officer, known for his competence, integrity and dedication to work. He enjoys the trust and confidence of Minister Incharge of PWD and Programme Implementation. As a part of his job profile, he is responsible for policy formulation, execution of projects relating to infrastructure initiatives in the State. Besides, he oversees the technical and administrative aspects relating to planning, designing and construction etc.

Subash's Minister is an important Minister in the state and significant growth in urban infrastructure development and road network has been registered during his tenure. He is very keen for launching of ambitious road construction project in the near future.

Subash is in regular touch with the Minister and is working various modalities of road construction project. Regular meetings, interactions and presentations are made by him to the Minister before a formal public announcement of the project is made by the Minister. Subash's only son Vikas is in real estate business. His son from his own sources is aware that a mega road project is on the anvil and announcement in this regard is expected anytime. He is very keen to know from his father the exact location of the upcoming project. He knows that there would be quantum jump in the prices of land in the vicinity. Buying land at this stage at cheaper prices would pay him rich dividends. He is pleading with him (his father) day in and day out to share him location of the proposed project. He assured him that he would handle the matter discretely as it would not attract any adverse notice as he in the normal course, keeps on buying land as a part of his business. He feels pressurised because of constant pleadings by his son.

Another significant aspect of the matter pertained to the extra/undue interest in the above project by the Minister PWD. His nephew was also having big infrastructure project company. In fact, the Minister has also introduced his nephew to him and indicated to him to take care of his nephew's business interest in the forthcoming project. The Minister encouraged him to act fast in the matter as early announcement and execution of mega road project would enhance his status in the party and public life.

In the above backdrop, Subash is in a fix as to the future course of action.

- (a) Discuss the ethical issues involved in the case.
- (b) Critically examine the options available to Subash in the above situation.
- (c) Which of the above would be most appropriate and why? (250 words, 20 marks).

Directions: Intro-----Stakeholders involved + Explain each sub-question + Conclusion.

Introduction:

The case highlights the complex conflict between public duty, confidentiality, conflict of interest, political pressure, nepotism and integrity and reflects the challenges between family and professional relations.

Main Body

Key Stakeholders involved

- Minister in charge of PWD
- Subhash, Secretary, PWD
- Minister's Nephew
- Subhash's Son
- People in the project region.

(a) Discuss the ethical issues involved in the case.

- Conflict of interest
- Abuse of public office
- Insider information & unfair advantage
- Transparency issues with tender
- Influence in decision-making
- Nepotism & Favouritism
- Political pressure
- Conflict between personal and professional relations
- Public trust

(b) Critically examine the options available to Subash in the above situation.

Options	Merits	Limitations
Share the information with his son (fully/partially)	Satisfies family pressure; maintains relationship with son	Serious breach of confidentiality; facilitates speculation; unethical and potentially illegal; damages integrity
Share the information with the Minister's nephew (fully/partially).	Maintains the good relationship with the minister.	Serious breach of confidentiality.
Strictly refuse both and proceed merit-based process	Protects impartiality and public interest	Minister may perceive it as insubordination; political pressure may increase
Recuse himself from the project entirely.	Temporarily escapes the immediate ethical dilemma and protects his personal integrity from direct contamination.	Demonstrates a lack of professional fortitude.
Report about the pressure through the appropriate institutional channel	Protects public interest and rule of law	Can have career and administrative repercussions

(c) Which of the above would be most appropriate and why?

Candidates must choose according to their own perspective.

Most appropriate option available - Strictly refuse both and proceed merit-based process.

Conclusion:

Give a balanced conclusion.

Subash's loyalty to the Minister cannot override his constitutional and professional duty to the public.

True integrity lies not merely in avoiding personal corruption but also in preventing the misuse of public information and office by others.

