Ethics & Morality · GS - IV

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?**

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EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2025	GS - IV	Ethics & Morality

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
20	~250 words

Answer Hint

Conflict of interest, insider information, nepotism, undue influence, public trust, confidentiality, integrity, impartiality, ministerial pressure, procurement ethics, recusal, disclosure, institutional safeguards, whistle-blowing

Model Answer

(a) Ethical Issues

The case involves multiple conflicts of interest:

1. Disclosure of confidential project information to Subash's son could enable speculative land purchases and provide an unfair private advantage.
2. Subash faces a conflict between paternal affection and his duty to protect official information.
3. The Minister's attempt to favour his nephew's infrastructure company raises concerns of nepotism, undue influence and abuse of office.
4. Subash's proximity to the Minister creates an additional risk of compromising administrative neutrality.
5. The case involves public trust, fairness in procurement, confidentiality, integrity and accountability.

(b) Options Available

Subash may disclose the project location to his son, refuse privately while continuing normally, confront the Minister directly, formally record and resist improper instructions, seek written directions, disclose the conflict to the competent authority and ensure transparent procurement procedures.

(c) Critical Evaluation

Sharing information with his son would violate confidentiality and create an unfair private benefit. Merely refusing his son without institutional safeguards would address only one aspect of the problem. Direct confrontation with the Minister without documentation could create professional complications.

The better approach is to maintain confidentiality, clearly advise his son not to use non-public information, document all relevant interactions with

the Minister, insist that procurement and project decisions follow established rules, and disclose any conflict or improper pressure to the competent competent authority through appropriate channels.

(d) Most Appropriate Course

Subash should protect confidential information, refuse preferential treatment to both his son and the Minister's nephew, seek written instructions wherever questionable directions arise, ensure transparent tendering, and formally report or escalate attempts to influence the procurement process.

Conclusion

A civil servant's loyalty is ultimately to the Constitution, law and public interest, not to individuals. Subash must preserve institutional integrity even when doing so may strain his relationship with his son or political executive.

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