



Mains Practice Question

Case Study

You are the secretary of the public works department in a state. You are responsible for overseeing the construction and maintenance of various infrastructure projects in the state. Recently, a bridge that was built by your department collapsed, killing several people and injuring many others. The bridge was inaugurated just a few months ago and was supposed to be a model of engineering excellence. The public is outraged by this incident and blames your department for negligence and corruption. They demand your resignation and hold protests outside your office. Some media channels also accuse you of being involved in a scam and taking bribes from the contractor who built the bridge. You are shocked and saddened by this tragedy and want to find out the truth behind the collapse. You also want to defend your reputation and integrity, which you have earned through years of hard work and honesty.

What will you do in this situation? Explain the ethical issues involved and the course of action you will take.

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Approach:

- **Introduction:** Provide a brief overview of the case study and the key challenges faced.
- **Body:** Mention involved ethical issues and stakeholders and discuss the possible actions and their merits and demerits.
- **Conclusion:** Summarize the approach outlined and reiterate the commitment to ethics, integrity, and the well-being of the public.

Introduction:

A bridge, which was newly built and considered a great engineering feat, collapsed causing loss of life and injuries. As the secretary of the public works department, I am facing public anger, calls for resignation, and accusations of negligence and corruption. My main goals are to find out the truth behind the collapse, regain public trust, and protect my reputation and integrity.

Body:

Stakeholders	Associated Ethical Issues
Me as secretary	Accountability, Transparency, Conflict of interest, Duty vs Personal benefits
Media	Truth, fairness, responsibility
Law Enforcement Agencies	Non-Partisanship, justice and accountability
Contractors	Honesty, performance, liability
Department	Quality, competence, professionalism
Government	Governance, oversight, public interest
Public	Safety, trust

Possible Actions: Their Merits & Demerits

Possible Actions		Merits	Demerits
1.	Resign Immediately	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shows my moral courage and accountability for the failure ▪ Respects the public sentiment ▪ Avoids any further controversy or criticism against you ▪ Gives an opportunity for a fresh start and a new leadership for the department 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ May be seen as an admission of guilt or incompetence by the public, the media, or the government ▪ May create immediate leadership vacuum in the department ▪ May deprive me of a chance to defend myself and prove my innocence or integrity ▪ May waste my experience and expertise that could have been used for improving the situation.
2.	Take proper action and ensure justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shows my professional competence and commitment to my duty ▪ Restores public trust and confidence in my department and the government ▪ Ensures justice and accountability for the victims and their families ▪ Prevents any recurrence of such incidents in the future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ May take a lot of time, effort, and resources to conduct a thorough investigation and take disciplinary and legal action ▪ May face resistance or opposition from some of my subordinates, contractors, or consultants who may be involved in the scam or the negligence ▪ May expose some of my mistakes or shortcomings, if any, in the bridge project ▪ May not satisfy or appease some of the public or the media who may demand my resignation

My Course of Action:

The First action is likely not to be taken by me. I'll take second action and my course of action will be:

- **Assisting the victims:** First and foremost, I would immediately mobilize all available resources to provide medical assistance and support to the injured victims. Additionally, I would extend support to the families of the deceased, ensuring they receive the necessary compensation and assistance during this difficult time.
- **Independent investigation:** To determine the cause of the bridge collapse, I would initiate an independent investigation by reputable experts in structural engineering and infrastructure. This investigation should be unbiased, transparent, and without any conflicts of interest.
- **Suspension of concerned officials:** In order to ensure a fair investigation, any officials or employees suspected of involvement in negligence or corruption would be immediately

suspended.

- **Collaboration with law enforcement:** I would cooperate fully with law enforcement agencies to investigate any allegations of corruption or bribery. This would help separate facts from baseless accusations and ensure a thorough examination of all possible angles.
- **Communication and transparency:** It is crucial to maintain open lines of communication with the public, media, and affected stakeholders. I would hold press conferences and issue regular updates on the progress of the investigation.
- **Rectifying the issues:** Once the investigation identifies the causes of the bridge collapse, I would take immediate action to rectify the situation. This could involve rebuilding the bridge, ensuring proper safety protocols are in place, and revisiting the construction and inspection processes within the department. Implementing stronger quality control measures and oversight mechanisms would be crucial to prevent such incidents in the future.
- **Accountability and reforms:** If any evidence of corruption or bribery emerges during the investigation, I would ensure that those responsible face appropriate legal consequences. In parallel, I would introduce reforms and strict protocols within the department to prevent corruption and enhance transparency involving revisiting the procurement process, strengthening oversight mechanisms, and establishing a code of conduct for employees.

Conclusion:

- By focusing on transparency, independent investigation, accountability, rectification, and rebuilding public trust, I would strive to uncover the truth, hold responsible parties accountable, and prevent similar incidents in the future. Upholding ethics, integrity, and the welfare of the public would be at the forefront of my actions and decision-making process.

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