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Q11

Case study. You are heading a district administration in a particular department. Your senior officer calls you from the State Headquarters and tells you that a plot in Rampur village is to have a building constructed on it for a school. A visit is scheduled during which he will visit the site along with the chief engineer and the senior architect. He wants you to check out all the papers relating to it and to ensure that the visit is properly arranged. You examine the file which relates to the period before you joined the department. The land was acquired from the local Panchayat at a nominal cost and the papers show that clearance certificates are available from the two of the three authorities who have to certify the site's suitability. There is no certification by the architect available on file. You decide to visit Rampur to ensure that all is in order as stated on file. When you visit Rampur, you find that the plot under reference is part of Thakurgarh Fort and that the walls, ramparts, etc., are running across it. The fort is well away from the main village, therefore a school here will be a serious inconvenience for the children. However, the area near the village has potential to expand into a larger residential area. The development charges on the existing plot, at the fort, will be very high and the question of heritage site has not been addressed. Moreover, the Sarpanch, at the time of acquisition of the land, was a relative of your predecessor. The whole transaction appears to have been done with some vested interest. (a) List the likely vested interests of the concerned parties. (b) Some of the options for action available to you are listed below. Discuss the merits and demerits of each of the options: You can await the visit of the superior officer and let him take a decision. You can seek his advice in writing or on phone. You can consult your predecessor/colleagues, etc., and then decide what to do. You can find out if any alternate plot can be got in exchange and then send a comprehensive written report. Can you suggest any other option with proper justification?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2015 · GS IV · 20 marks · Ethics Case Studies

Case Studies on above issues.

Core demand of the question

• **District head:** a school is to be built on a Rampur plot. File from before your posting shows cheap Panchayat land, two of three clearances, no architect certificate. On visit, the plot is on Thakurgarh Fort, far from the village, costly to develop, heritage ignored; Sarpanch was a relative of your predecessor. (a) Likely vested interests. (b) Merits and demerits of waiting for the superior; seeking advice in writing or by phone; consulting predecessor/colleagues then deciding; seeking an alternate plot and a written report. Suggest any other option with justification

Revision summary

The plot is on a fort, far from children, costly, and tied to a predecessor's relative as Sarpanch.

Likely interests are cheap heritage land, contractors, speculators and prestige stones.

Silent waiting on the superior is obedience that hides facts.

Phone advice lacks a trail; consulting the predecessor as guide is compromised.

• **Best path:** recorded inspection, written alert, heritage notice, and a real school site in the village.

Introduction

A school on a fort wall is not a paperwork slip. It looks like a land play using a children's building as cover. My job is to protect students, heritage and the file, not the predecessor's family story.

Body

Stakeholders

- Children who would walk to a fort far from the village, and parents.
- Heritage of Thakurgarh Fort and the public who own it.
- Present Sarpanch and villagers who need a real school.
- Your predecessor, the then Sarpanch (a relative), and possible private speculators on the village-side land.
- Superior officer, chief engineer and senior architect about to visit.
- You as the district head of the department, new to the chair.

(a) Likely vested interests

- **Predecessor and then Sarpanch:** a cheap transfer of fort land that should never have been sold as a "plot", perhaps with a later regularisation or a quiet private use of leftover ground.
- **Speculators on the habitable village-side land:** keep the school away so that residential expansion stays in private hands, or the reverse - use a future "failed school" to unlock fort-adjacent real estate.
- **Contractors:** high development charges on a ruin mean a fat civil work.
- **Local political actors:** a foundation stone on a historic site as prestige, regardless of children.
- **Officers who signed two clearances:** a past favour, a future silence.
- None of this is yet a proved crime. It is enough to stop a naive "all in order" note.

Values

- Children's best interest and **Article 21A (education that is actually reachable)**.
- Heritage protection; a fort is not a vacant lot.
- Integrity, courage, and a speaking file.
- Loyalty to the Constitution, not to a predecessor.

(b) Options given, merits and demerits

- **Option 1:** Await the visit and let the superior decide, saying nothing inconvenient.
- **Merit:** hierarchy; you look obedient; conflict is postponed.
- **Demerit:** you become a host for a possibly illegal inspection; children and heritage stay at risk; you may be treated as having hidden facts you already saw.
- **Option 2:** Seek the superior's advice in writing, or only on the phone.
- **Written advice:** merit is a trail and shared responsibility; demerit is delay if the visit is tomorrow, and a superior who is already committed to the site may dictate a cover-up on letterhead.
- **Phone only:** merit is speed; demerit is no record, easy denial, and you remain alone if the story turns.
- **Option 3:** Consult predecessor and colleagues, then decide.
- **Merit:** colleagues may know alternate land and the architect's silence; institutional memory.
- **Demerit:** the predecessor is a party in interest. Consulting him as a guide is like asking the fox about the coop. Informal chats can become a collusive story.
- **Option 4:** Find whether an alternate plot near the village can be exchanged, then send a comprehensive written report.
- **Merit:** solves the children's distance, flags heritage, puts costs and the missing architect certificate on paper, and offers a way forward rather than only a scandal.
- **Demerit:** exchange takes time and Panchayat politics; a written report may anger the superior before the visit. Still the least bad of the listed paths.

Other option I would add

- **Option 5 (preferred mix):** Immediately record a site inspection note: fort walls, distance, missing architect clearance, heritage risk, predecessor-Sarpanch relation as a fact to be inquired, not as gossip. Inform the superior in writing before the visit, with photographs, and request that the visit become an inquiry into suitability, not a foundation-stone rehearsal. Alert the competent heritage authority (Archaeological Survey of India or State archaeology, as the law of that fort requires) that a school is proposed on ramparts. Start a parallel, transparent search for a village-side site with the current Panchayat, not the old Sarpanch. If a crime appears, send a vigilance note through the proper channel; do not leak a media circus that destroys the school idea itself.
- **Merit:** truth before the VIP party arrives; children and monument both protected; you still offer a school, which is the public purpose.
- **Demerit:** you may be labelled obstructionist; that is cheaper than a collapsed wall or a CAG paragraph with your signature on the old file.

What I would not do

- I would not "regularise" the fort plot to save a visit's face.
- I would not sit on the architect's missing certificate.
- I would not hand the decision to the predecessor as a courtesy.

Flow diagram

Old file two clearances -> Site: fort not village
Site: fort not village -> Written inspection note
Written inspection note -> Inform superior before VIP visit
Written inspection note -> Heritage authority
Written inspection note -> Village-side alternate plot
Silent wait -> Complicity

Conclusion

Vested interests likely sit in cheap fort land, village-side speculation, fat civil works and a family link at acquisition. Waiting silently is complicity. Phone advice without a record is weak. The workable path is a written site report, heritage alert, alternate land near children, and a visit that inspects rather than blesses.

Facts & figures

Article 21A, Constitution of India

Right to education; a school that children cannot reach without crossing a fort is a hollow compliance.

Heritage / ancient monument law

Forts and ramparts typically cannot be treated as ordinary Panchayat plots; competent archaeological authorities must be heard.

Architect's site certificate

A professional clearance missing on file is a red flag, not a clerical gap to fill after the foundation stone.

Conflict of interest at acquisition

A Sarpanch related to the then departmental head makes the cheap sale a matter for inquiry, not for courtesy.

Speaking inspection note

Photographs and facts on the file protect children and the officer when a superior visit is already scheduled.

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