UPSC Mains practice – reference note

GS-IV · 07-11-2026 · 20 marks · https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/upsc-mains-practice/2026-11-07-tender-conflict-of-interest

Case study. Vigilance Awareness Week 2026 was observed on the theme "Probity for Prosperity". Ananya, a Deputy Director in a Union Ministry, is a member of the technical evaluation committee for a ₹40-crore tender to supply smart-classroom kits to 2,000 government schools in aspirational districts. While scrutinising the bids, she finds that two eligibility conditions – a minimum annual turnover of ₹100 crore and software "certified by the original equipment manufacturer" – are so narrow that only one of the five bidders qualifies. She then learns that the managing director of that firm is the brother-in-law of the Director who chairs the committee; he has not declared this. When she raises the matter informally, the Director says the kits must reach the schools before the next academic session, that "every tender is written this way", and reminds her that her confirmation report is due. Meanwhile, an excluded bidder has complained to the Ministry and a reporter has messaged her for comments. (a) Identify the ethical issues involved in the case. (b) Evaluate the options available to Ananya. (c) What course of action should she adopt, and why?

1. The news hook

- Vigilance Awareness Week 2026 was observed from 26 October to 1 November 2026 on the theme "Probity for Prosperity" (Hindi: "Satyanishtha se Samriddhi"), announced by CVC Circular No. 05/09/26 dated 18.09.2026.
- The week opened with public servants taking the Integrity Pledge on 26 October; it is part of a three-month CVC campaign on preventive vigilance (17 August – 16 November 2026).

2. Rules to quote

Rule / instrument	What it says	Use in the answer
CCS (Conduct) Rules, 1964 – Rule 3(1), clauses added by the Third Amendment Rules, 2014 (G.S.R. 845(E), 27.11.2014)	Take decisions solely in public interest and use public resources efficiently, effectively and economically; declare private interests relating to public duties and resolve conflicts to protect the public interest; place oneself under no obligation that may influence duties; decide and recommend on merit alone	Conflict of interest, recusal, merit
General Financial Rules 2017 – Rule 144	Efficiency, economy, transparency, fair and equitable treatment of suppliers, promotion of competition; specifications objective, functional, generic, measurable, no brand; meet basic needs without superfluous and non-essential features	Tailor-made eligibility clauses
Government e-Marketplace (GeM)	Procurement through GeM is mandatory for goods and services available on it	Fast, transparent re-tender
Integrity Pact	Recommended by the CVC since 2007 (Office Order No. 41/12/07, 04.12.2007); buyer and bidders commit not to engage in corrupt practices; Independent External Monitors oversee it	Clean re-tender
PIDPI Resolution, 2004	CVC designated to receive complaints from whistle-blowers; identity kept confidential; CVC can act against victimisation	Protection if victimised
Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014	Enacted, but not yet brought into force	Value-add / gap

3. Ethics frameworks

- Nolan Committee (UK, 1995) – seven principles of public life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, leadership.
- Second Administrative Reforms Commission – 4th Report "Ethics in Governance" (2007).
- Types of conflict of interest: actual, apparent (perceived), potential; pecuniary and non-pecuniary. Tools: declaration, recusal, divestment, written record.

4. Case-study method (20 marks, 250 words)

- Read the sub-questions first; give each a heading.
- Stakeholders and ethical issues → options with merits and demerits → chosen course of action (step-wise) → values and conclusion.
- The best option is lawful, practical, solves the original problem and protects the weakest stakeholder.

5. Value-add terms

- Probity, conflict of interest, recusal, courage of conviction, preventive vigilance, restrictive (tailor-made) specifications, Integrity Pact, whistle-blower protection, dissent note, ends vs means.

Official sources

- Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) – Vigilance Awareness Week, Integrity Pledge, complaints – https://cvc.gov.in/
- Department of Personnel and Training – CCS (Conduct) Rules, 1964 – https://dopt.gov.in/
- Department of Expenditure – General Financial Rules 2017 – https://doe.gov.in/
- Government e-Marketplace (GeM) – https://gem.gov.in/

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