



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES  
**Sandiganbayan**  
Quezon City

SIXTH DIVISION

**PEOPLE OF THE PHILIPPINES,**  
Plaintiff,

**SB-18-CRM-0003**  
For: Violation of Section 3(e)  
of R.A. No. 3019

**SB-18-CRM-0004**  
For: Violation of Section 3(g)  
of R.A. No. 3019

**SB-18-CRM-0005**  
For: Violation of Section 3(h)  
of R.A. No. 3019

- versus -

**ARTHUR C. YAP, ET AL.**

Accused.

*Present*

**FERNANDEZ, SJ, J.,**

Chairperson

**MIRANDA, J. and**

**VIVERO, J.**

*Promulgated:*

*October 2, 2020/jef*

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**DECISION**

**FERNANDEZ, SJ, J.**

Accused Ronilo A. Beronio, then the Executive Director of the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice), is charged with Violation of Sec. 3(e) of Republic Act No. 3019<sup>1</sup> (R.A. No. 3019), for allegedly conspiring with his co-accused, and instituting the PhilRice Car Plan that allowed certain beneficiary-employees to obtain personal loans from the Philippine National Bank (PNB) for the purchase of their private cars, secured by PhilRice funds through Hold Out Agreements (HOA) with the PNB. He is further charged with Violation of Sec. 3(g) of R.A. No. 3019 for allegedly conspiring with his co-accused, and signing said HOAs with the PNB, pursuant to said Car Plan, subjecting

<sup>1</sup> Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act

**DECISION**

*People vs. Yap, et al.*  
*SB-18-CRM-0003 to 0005*

Page 2 of 5

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PhilRice's deposit with the PNB to the agreement that said deposit will not be withdrawn until the loans are paid in full. Finally, he is charged with Violation of Sec. 3(h) of R.A. No. 3019 for allegedly setting the guidelines for said Car Plan and entering into HOAs with the PNB on behalf of PhilRice, while being a beneficiary of said Car Plan.

The accusatory portion of the Informations read:

**SB-18-CRM-0003**  
(Violation of Sec. 3[e] of R.A. No. 3019)

That from the year 2008 to 2009 or sometime prior or subsequent thereto, in Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines, and within this Honorable Court's jurisdiction, accused public officers **ARTHUR YAP y CUA**, then Secretary of the Department of Agriculture (DA) and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice), **RONILLO BERONIO y ALEJANDRO**, then Executive Director of PhilRice, **JOHNIFER BATARA y GALAMAY, FE D. LAYSA, WILLIAM PADOLINA y GONZALES, WINSTON C. CORVERA, GELIA CASTILLO y TAGUMPAY, SENEN BACANI y CARLOS, and RODOLFO UNDAN y CORPUZ**, all Members of PhilRice Board of Trustees, while in the performance of their administrative and/or official functions, conspiring with one another, acting with manifest partiality, evident bad faith and/or gross inexcusable negligence, did then and there willfully, unlawfully and criminally give unwarranted benefits and advantage to PhilRice Car Plan's beneficiary-employees, namely: Ronilo A. Beronio, Sophia T. Borja, Rolando T. Cruz, Rodolfo S. Escabarte, Jr., Sergio R. Francisco, Manuel G. Gaspar, Edgar M. Libetario, Mario M. Movillon, Evangeline B. Sibayan, and Artemio B. Vasallo, by instituting said Car Plan that allowed the said beneficiary-employees to obtain personal loans from the Philippine National Bank (PNB) for the purchase of their private cars, secured by the PhilRice funds through Hold Out Agreements with PNB; which private cars were then leased by PhilRice for the official use of the beneficiary-employee without the benefit of public bidding; with the beneficiary-employee being still entitled to transportation allowance despite the use of an official vehicle; thereby causing undue injury to PhilRice for it could not utilize its deposits with PNB during the subsistence of the loans and its failure to obtain the best possible car rental deals, among other things.

**CONTRARY TO LAW.**

**SB-18-CRM-0004**  
(Violation of Sec. 3[g] of R.A. No. 3019)

That in 2009 or sometime prior or subsequent thereto, in Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines, and within this Honorable Court's

DECISION

People vs. Yap, et al.  
SB-18-CRM-0003 to 0005

Page 3 of 5

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jurisdiction, accused public officers **ARTHUR YAP y CUA**, then Secretary of the Department of Agriculture (DA) and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice), **JOHNIFER BATARA y GALAMAY**, **FE D. LAYSA**, **WILLIAM PADOLINA y GONZALES**, **WINSTON C. CORVERA**, **GELIA CASTILLO y TAGUMPAY**, **SENEN BACANI y CARLOS**, and **RODOLFO UN DAN y CORPUZ**, all Members of PhilRice Board of Trustees, PhilRice Executive Director **RONILLO BERONIO y ALEJANDRO** (Beronio) and Cashier IV **FE N. LUMAWAG** (Lumawag) while in the performance of their administrative and/or official functions, conspiring with one another, did then and there willfully, unlawfully, and criminally enter into contracts / transactions in behalf of the government that were manifestly and grossly disadvantageous to it, with Beronio and Lumawag signing Hold Out Agreements (HOAs) with the Philippine National Bank (PNB), pursuant to PhilRice Car Plan instituted by the PhilRice Board of Trustees comprised of the above-mentioned accused, subjecting PhilRice's deposit with PNB to the agreement that said deposit will not be withdrawn until the car/personal loans guaranteed are paid in full amounting to PhP15,780,000.00.

**CONTRARY TO LAW.**

**SB-18-CRM-0005**  
(Violation of Sec. 3[h] of R.A. No. 3019)

That from 2008 to 2010 or sometime prior or subsequent thereto, in Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines, and within this Honorable Court's jurisdiction, accused **RONILLO BERONIO y ALEJANDRO**, a public officer being the Executive Director of Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice), while in the performance of his administrative and/or official functions, did then and there, willfully, unlawfully and criminally, intervene in contracts/transactions over which he had direct financial or pecuniary interest by issuing Administrative Orders setting the guidelines for the PhilRice Car Plan and entering into Hold Out Agreements with the Philippine National Bank (PNB), on behalf of PhilRice, whereby PhilRice funds were used as security for the loan obligations of PhilRice employees under the PhilRice Car Plan, all the while being himself a beneficiary of the PhilRice Car Plan.

**CONTRARY TO LAW.**

During his arraignment on May 24, 2019, accused Beronio entered his plea of "Not Guilty" to the Information in the present cases.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Record, Vol. 15, pp. 229, 233-A and 233-B

**DECISION**

*People vs. Yap, et al.*  
*SB-18-CRM-0003 to 0005*

Page 4 of 5

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In the Resolution dated July 29, 2020, approving the parties' proposed terms<sup>3</sup> for accused Beronio's plea of guilty to three (3) counts of the lesser offense of Violation of Sec. 7(a) of R.A. No. 6713,<sup>4</sup> this Court considered the consent given by the Ombudsman and the Special Prosecutor, as well as accused Beronio's express waiver of his constitutional right against double jeopardy,<sup>5</sup> in view of the fact that in SB-18-CRM-0005, in addition to the allegation that accused Beronio issued administrative orders setting guidelines for the PhilRice Car Plan, it was also alleged that he entered into the subject HOAs—the same act alleged in SB-18-CRM-0004.

During the partial remote hearing on October 2, 2020, accused Beronio withdrew his plea of "Not Guilty" in these cases. Thereafter, upon re-arraignment and reading of the Informations in English, a language known and understood by him, accused Beronio, assisted by his counsel, Atty. Humphrey T. Monteroso, entered his plea of "Guilty" to the lesser offense of Violation of Sec. 7(a) of R.A. No. 6713 in SB-18-CRM-0003 to 0005.<sup>6</sup>

When queried, accused Beronio and his counsel informed the Court that accused Beronio fully understood the nature and consequences of his entering a plea of guilty to three (3) counts of the lesser offense of Violation of Sec. 7(a) of R.A. No. 6713.

**WHEREFORE**, in SB-18-CRM-0003 to 0005, accused RONILO A. BERONIO is found GUILTY beyond reasonable doubt of Violation of Sec. 7(a) of R.A. No. 6713, and is accordingly sentenced, for each of the three (3) counts, to pay a fine in the amount of Five Thousand Pesos (P5,000.00),<sup>7</sup> or a total of Fifteen Thousand Pesos (P15,000.00).

SO ORDERED.

<sup>3</sup> *Joint Motion to Approve Plea Bargaining Agreement* dated September 12, 2019

<sup>4</sup> *Sec. 7. Prohibited Acts and Transactions.* – In addition to acts and omissions of public officials and employees now prescribed in the Constitution and existing laws, the following shall constitute prohibited acts and transactions of any public official and employee and are hereby declared to be unlawful: (a) *Financial and material interest.* – Public officials and employees shall not, directly or indirectly, have any financial or material interest in any transaction requiring the approval of their office.

<sup>5</sup> *Waiver of Right Against Double Jeopardy* dated March 13, 2020

<sup>6</sup> Order dated October 2, 2020

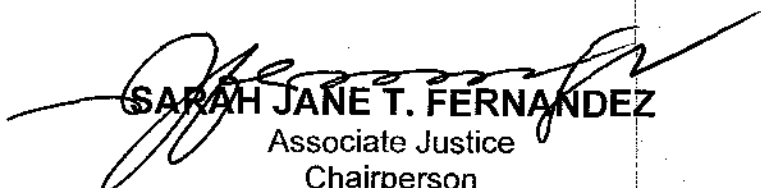
<sup>7</sup> *R.A. No. 6713. Sec. 11. Penalties* – (a) x x x. Violations of Sections 7, 8 or 9 of this Act shall be punishable with imprisonment not exceeding five (5) years, or a fine not exceeding five thousand pesos (P5,000), or both, and, in the discretion of the court of competent jurisdiction, disqualification to hold public office.

DECISION

People vs. Yap, et al.  
SB-18-CRM-0003 to 0005

Page 5 of 5

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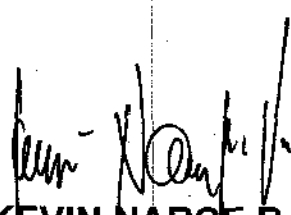


**SARAH JANE T. FERNANDEZ**  
Associate Justice  
Chairperson

**We Concur:**



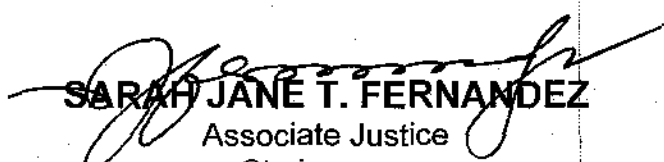
**KARL B. MIRANDA**  
Associate Justice



**KEVIN NARCE B. VIVERO**  
Associate Justice

**ATTESTATION**


I attest that the conclusions in the above decision were reached in consultation before the case was assigned to the writer of the opinion of the Court's Division.



**SARAH JANE T. FERNANDEZ**  
Associate Justice  
Chairperson

**CERTIFICATION**

Pursuant to Article VIII, Section 13, of the Constitution, and the Division Chairperson's Attestation, it is hereby certified that the conclusions in the above decision were reached in consultation before the case was assigned to the writer of the opinion of the Court's Division.



**AMPARO M. CABSTAJE-TANG**  
Presiding Justice