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Company Must Pay Injured Man \$18 Million

By Robert Iafolla
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LOS ANGELES — A Taiwanese company must pay \$17.7 million to a man severely injured in a road accident because the wife of the company's U.S. president had failed a California driving test four days before she struck the man with a company car, a Los Angeles County Superior Court jury has found.

The jury actually awarded \$18.6 million, thought to be the largest personal injury-verdict in the state this year, but decided Thursday that the plaintiff, Joyson Mallabo, was 5 percent at fault. *Mallabo v. Wan Hai Lines (America) Ltd.*, VC043698 (L.A. Super. Ct., filed Jan. 19, 2005).

Mallabo was riding his motorcycle on Oct. 23, 2004, at an uncontrolled intersection in Cerritos when Wen-Ting Tai turned a Wan Hai Lines company car into the motorcycle's path while attempting a left turn, causing a violent crash.

"Anytime a plaintiff is on a motorcycle, the jury will find them somewhat at fault, just because they're on a motorcycle," said David M. Ring, who represented Mallabo with his partner John C. Taylor. The lawyers are name partners at Taylor & Ring in Los Angeles.

Douglas D. Cullins, of Cullins & Grady in Laguna Beach, represented Wan Hai Lines in the case and was unavailable for comment Monday.

Mallabo, who was 23 at the time of the accident, suffered internal injuries, a fractured pelvis and lost the use of his right leg from paralysis and nerve damage. After extensive surgeries, he is able to walk with a cane, Ring said.

The jury found that Wan Hai Lines, a Taiwanese deep-sea shipping company, must pay Mallabo \$3.6 million for medical bills and lost wages and \$15 million for past and future pain and suffering.

The \$18.6 million verdict may turn out to be the largest in a personal-injury case in California this year. In 2006, there was one larger: a \$23.4 million verdict in a case where a teenage boy was severely brain-damaged in an auto

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