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**Lawyer Sues Client For Legal Fees**

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**BODY:**

A RETIRED lawyer is suing his former client in the High Court, claiming that the client did not pay more than \$ 250,000 in legal fees for handling the purchase of three ships.

The client says he paid \$ 118,500 for the lawyer's services in full. He is counter-claiming US\$ 50,000 (S\$ 84,000) that he says he paid before one of the deals fell through.

The retired lawyer, Mr Govindan Balan Nair, 60, ran a one-man practice, G. Balan Nair & Co.

He said in his court papers that he acted for Mr Don Ariyaseela de Silva Wikramanayake, the chairman of a salvage company in Sri Lanka, between March 1993 and June 1994.

Mr Govindan, who is represented by Mr **Vijai Parwani**, said that he issued Mr de Silva, a Sri Lankan national, a bill for \$ 254,074.38 on March 21, 1997.

Of this, he said, \$ 60,000 was for handling the purchase of a ship called Silk Route Supply, \$ 58,000 for another ship called Silk Route Supplier 2, \$ 98,000 for negotiating the purchase of a third ship named Golden Ocean; and \$ 45,094.38 for his expenses.

Mr de Silva had paid him \$ 7,020 earlier, he said.

He claimed \$ 254,074.38 and interest on the sum at 6 per cent a year from the start of his suit in October 1997.

Mr de Silva, who is represented by Mr Navinder Singh, said that Mr Govindan had not bought Golden Ocean for him as instructed.

He said he paid the lawyer \$ 118,500 in all, between January and November 1994, and denied having received Mr Govindan's bill for \$ 254,074.38, which he described as an unreasonable sum.

Turning to his counter-claim, he said that he gave the lawyer US\$ 50,000 on Feb 1, 1994 for the purchase of Golden Ocean. But the deal fell through.

The lawyer, he said, had yet to transfer Silk Route Supplier 2 to his Sri Lankan company, Master Divers.

He wants Mr Govindan to hand over all documents involving that ship, and has asked for an order for the lawyer to refund him any money left over. He also wants 6 per cent interest a year on the sum he is claiming.

The hearing has been adjourned.