

Beijing looks to put the brakes on the sale of Hutchison Ports

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April 1, 2025



Beijing has moved to prevent the sale of CK Hutchison's ports division to BlackRock and Mediterranean Shipping Co (MSC), a transaction that was meant to have gone through tomorrow.

The decision last month by the Li Ka-shing-controlled conglomerate to sell 80% of Hutchison Ports for \$22.8bn in a record-breaking ports transaction that covers 43 ports comprising 199 berths in 23 countries has been viewed very poorly by Chinese authorities. Now Beijing has made clear it will try and block the sale.

"The State Administration for Market Regulation has indicated it will conduct a review according to the law to protect fair market competition and safeguard public interest," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said at a press conference in Beijing yesterday.

Guo said Beijing "always firmly opposes using economic coercion and acts of hegemonic bullying that infringe upon and harm the legitimate rights and interests of other countries."

If the deal goes through, MSC, the world's largest container line, would also top Drewry's Global Terminal Operator (GTO) league table.

MSC's deal with BlackRock to take over Hutchison's non-China terminals would see the carrier vault over the likes of PSA International, COSCO, APM Terminals and DP World on Drewry's list to boast a combined volume of 78.3m teu.

Hutchison Ports was the original global terminal operator, moving beyond its Hong Kong origins in the early 1990s to invest initially overseas in Felixstowe and Shenzhen, rapidly building up a portfolio that for many years was the largest network of container terminals in the world to go alongside the conglomerate's other interests in property, telecoms, and retail. Over the past 20 years, CK Hutchison's ports dominance has slipped from first to sixth spot among global terminal operators.

Leading global/international terminal operators, equity-adjusted throughput, 2023

Ranking 2023	Operator	2023		
		Million teu	% change vs. 2022	% share world container port throughput
1	PSA International	62.6	4.6%	7.2%
2	China Merchants Ports	55.0	8.7%	6.4%
3	China Cosco Shipping	53.8	1.4%	6.2%
4	APM Terminals	48.9	-1.2%	5.6%
5	DP World	44.3	-4.7%	5.1%
6	Hutchison Ports	43.0	-4.6%	5.0%
7	MSC Group (incl. TIL & AGL)	42.3	10.3%	4.9%
	Sub-total	350.0	2.0%	40.4%
	<i>Other GTOs</i>	<i>78.8</i>	<i>3.1%</i>	<i>9.1%</i>
	Total GTOs	428.8	2.3%	48.6%

Source: [Drewry's Global Container Terminal Operators Annual Review and Forecast 2024/25](#)