

Alibaba.com \$2.5B privatization bid approved

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(AP) -- Chinese e-commerce firm Alibaba Group's \$2.5 billion bid to take its Hong Kong-listed unit private was cleared Friday by minority shareholders, easing the way for CEO Jack Ma to gain more control over his company's destiny.

The approval comes less than a week after Alibaba Group said it was buying back roughly half of struggling U.S. [Internet company](#) Yahoo's stake for \$7.1 billion, as the [Chinese company](#) starts to extricate itself from a relationship that has grown strained over the years.

About 95 percent of Alibaba.com minority shareholders voted at a special meeting to approve Alibaba Group Holding Ltd.'s offer to buy back the 27 percent of Alibaba.com Ltd. that it doesn't own for 13.50 Hong Kong dollars a share. That's the same price at which the company went public in 2007.

The offer could cost up to HK\$19.6 billion (\$2.5 billion).

Alibaba.com, a business-to-business website, has said that going private will allow it to restructure and make long-term strategic decisions as growth slows after years of rapid expansion without pressure from shareholders worried about the depressed [stock price](#).

The company plans to improve the quality of its site to attract more manufacturers, wholesalers and trading companies paying to use it. The number of users has started dropping and Alibaba says reversing that

decline could hurt financial results.

Hangzhou, China-based Alibaba Group also operates [Taobao.com](#), China's version of [eBay](#), and TMall, which brand owners can use to sell directly to consumers. Alibaba also runs a search engine for shoppers and an online payment service.

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