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China Tells Economists They Must Be Boosters

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HONG KONG—China economists and strategists at leading brokerages say they are hewing closer to the official government line and being cautious in their commentary in response to signs of tighter monitoring.

The latest sign came Friday when the state-run China Securities Journal said the main securities industry body has told brokerages to ensure their chief economists play a positive role in analyzing official policies and boosting investor confidence.

Government sensitivity to criticism has risen recently as discontent festers. Directives to be careful about commentary are a familiar feature of China's markets, especially during politically delicate periods. From time to time economists and analysts are sidelined from social media after sharing unauthorized or negative views.

Some local securities bureaus in China have told brokerages and other financial institutions to place more scrutiny on public statements made by employees, especially chief economists and research analysts, Chinese media outlet Cailian reported Thursday.

China Securities Journal, supervised by the government's official Xinhua News Agency, cited the official guidance as saying chief economists should publicize and interpret official policies and guide market expectations, and that those who repeatedly cause serious adverse effects with inappropriate comments should be punished or possibly fired. The newspaper didn't say what comments were inappropriate. The China Securities Regulatory Commission didn't respond to a request for comment.

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