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SOPA Announces the Winners of its 2026 Awards for Editorial Excellence

Award-winning journalist and author Karen Hao delivers keynote address on AI and journalism

SOPA introduces two new sports categories for the 2027 Awards

HONG KONG, June 18, 2026 — The Society of Publishers in Asia (SOPA), a Hong Kong-based not-for-profit organization dedicated to encouraging the highest standards of journalism, announced the winners of the prestigious SOPA 2026 Awards for Editorial Excellence.

(Full list of winners available here: <https://sopawards.com/the-sopa-awards/award-winners/>)

This year's awards —announced at the annual SOPA Awards Presentation Gala Dinner in Hong Kong— marked the 28th consecutive year that the awards have been held. Winners came from more than 700 entries from global, regional/local and Chinese-language media organizations, competing in 21 categories including Bahasa Indonesia, now in its fourth year.

China, its politics and economy, and its regional and global influence featured strongly among this year's winning and shortlisted entries.

Several smaller and first-time entrants who benefited from reduced fees distinguished themselves in this year's competition, continuing a trend toward greater diversity in the awards. SOPA received 54 entries from 34 small media outlets and first-time participants from 13 countries and territories — the highest level to date. Several took home top prizes including **Himal Southasian**, which won the Award for Excellence in the regional/local investigative category for [Pills, Perils, Profits: A Himal investigative series on Southasian pharma](#) while **Hong Kong Free Press** took the Honorable Mention in that category for [Is it a coincidence? - Hong Kong independent bookstores, publishers face simultaneous tax probes](#).

Among other winners and standout entries were:

EXCELLENCE IN HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTING

Frontier Myanmar won both the Award for Excellence and Honorable Mention in the regional/local group for its on-the-ground accounts of [Rakhine in crisis: Begging to survive amid starvation](#) and [Myanmar's election under fear: the ending is already known](#).

EXCELLENCE IN FEATURE WRITING

Initium Media won the top award in the Chinese-language group for [長篇現場：跨國代孕的代價，在她們身上/Surrogate Mothers: the Bodies that Paid the Price](#) which drilled down on the cross-border supply chain from mothers in Georgia to China's demand for reproductive services.



EXCELLENCE IN ARTS AND CULTURE REPORTING

The Reporter won the top award in the Chinese-language group for [跟唱紅色主旋律？台灣獨立樂團西進中國的靈魂拷問/Playing to the Main Melody? Taiwan Indie Music's China Predicament](#). The judges praised the article for examining “the emotional toll” China’s censorship takes on Taiwanese artists and the broader risks to Taiwan’s music culture.

EXCELLENCE IN EXPLANATORY REPORTING

Financial Times won the top global award for [Why Trump can't build iPhones in the US](#), which the judges said “stood out for its clarity and importance” for spelling out precisely why the U.S. president’s “dream was illusory.”

EXCELLENCE IN REPORTING BREAKING NEWS

CNN International won the top global award for its deadline reports on the May 2025 standoff of two nuclear powers in South Asia and why the network’s global audience should care: [CNN coverage of the India-Pakistan war](#).

EXCELLENCE IN OPINION WRITING

The Economist won the top global award for its Chaguan columns [From restaurant scandals to booming museums and economic battles](#), which the judges said provide “valuable windows into China today” and were “entertaining, with a dose of critical perspective.”

EXCELLENCE IN REPORTING ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Collaborations among media outlets took out top honors in this increasingly watched category.

The Gecko Project teamed up with a number of publications including Indonesia’s **Tempo**, to report [Green cars, toxic costs: Inside a nickel titan's pollution and cover-ups](#), which won in the global group, while **Earth Journalism Network**, won the Award for Excellence in the regional/local group for [Dark Side of the Boom](#).

EXCELLENCE IN PHOTOGRAPHY

Reuters won the top honor in the global group for its images of [Hong Kong fire](#), which the judges said resonate beyond the city, capturing “the sheer scale of the disaster while keeping the focus on the human cost.”

The Economist’s Sarah Wu won the SOPA Award for Young Journalist. The judges said her work “illuminates the complexities of contemporary China with nuance and humanity.”

The New York Times won the coveted SOPA Award for Public Service Journalism for [China's Malaise and Its People's Endurance](#) which tracked the lives ordinary Chinese face in a profoundly changing nation. The judges said that the NYT’s work shows “passion and persistence and journalistic excellence.”



During the event, SOPA also announced the introduction of two new categories for the SOPA 2027 Awards: **Excellence in Sports Journalism** and **Excellence in Sports Photography**. With the addition of the two categories, the total number of SOPA Awards categories will increase from 21 to 23.

Both categories will be open to entries under SOPA's existing awards structure: Global, Regional/Local, and Chinese-language groups.

"We are proud to recognize another exceptional year of journalism across the Asia Pacific," said James Wilson, Asia News Editor, Financial Times, and Co-Chair of SOPA's Editorial Committee. "The introduction next year of our two new sports categories reflects SOPA's commitment to evolve and will highlight excellence across more areas of journalism."

The SOPA 2026 Awards were administered by the SOPA Awards Administration Panel led by veteran journalist Chris Yeung. A total of 115 former and current journalists and journalism academics from around the world participated as volunteer judges this year. Harry Surjadi served as Head Judge for the Bahasa Indonesia category.

SOPA also expressed its appreciation to Karen Hao for delivering the keynote address on how artificial intelligence is reforming the world order and what journalists should do to respond to this urgent moment.

Taboola is an Associate Sponsor of the SOPA 2026 Awards. Channel News Asia, Telum Media, Create Productions and Getty Images are Supporting Partners.

Awards dinner photos are available here:
[\[Awards Dinner Photos\]](#)

About SOPA

The Society of Publishers in Asia (SOPA) is a Hong Kong-based not-for-profit organization founded in 1982 to champion freedom of the press, promote excellence in journalism, and support best practices for publishing platforms across the Asia-Pacific region.

Today, SOPA continues to serve as a leading voice for Asia's media industry, advocating for professional standards, press freedom, and quality journalism. The annual SOPA Awards for Editorial Excellence are the organization's flagship program and have served as a regional benchmark for journalism since 1999.

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