

Blogs

Sahabat AI: The Friend Indonesia Needs for a Digital Future



Sahabat AI is Indonesia's latest flagship development in Southeast Asia's race to become AI-first. Designed as a homegrown large language model (LLM), Sahabat AI promises to bridge the nation's linguistic diversity with its digital ambitions.

Spearheaded by Indosat, GoTo, and NVIDIA, this initiative is more than just a technological advancement; it's Indonesia's push toward digital sovereignty.

Built on the Gemma2 architecture and designed around Indonesia's rich linguistic landscape, the model has been meticulously trained with over 640,000 instruction-completion pairs. These include Bahasa Indonesia, Javanese, and Sundanese, with planned expansions for Batak and Balinese.

Honing a laser-focused approach, the model scored 64.123 on the SEA HELM (BHASA) evaluation benchmark. In short, the results are impressive, with the model outperforming established competitors like Llama-3.1-8B and sea-lionv3-9B.

The development of Sahabat AI showcases the power of strategic collaboration:

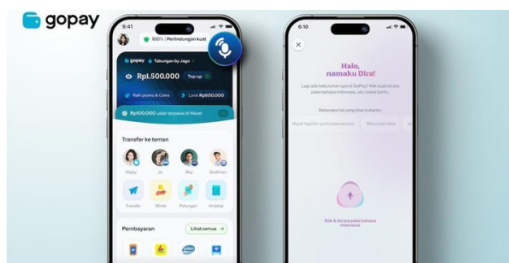
- **Global Tech Leadership:** Partnerships with AI Singapore and Tech Mahindra bring world-class expertise in model training
- **Academic Rigor:** Collaborations with the University of Indonesia and Bandung Institute of Technology ensure technical excellence
- **Cultural Integration:** Media partnerships with groups like Kompas Gramedia enhance local content relevance

What sets Sahabat AI apart is its understanding of local language as an:

- Enabler for business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-government (B2G) AI use cases.
- Open-source platform that invites local developers to craft AI applications that enhance public services, education, and businesses.

Sahabat AI isn't just about improving communication — it's about creating equal opportunities, supporting economic growth, and ensuring no one is left behind in Indonesia's digital transformation.

Sahabat AI's potential comes to life through various use cases designed to tackle the real challenges Indonesians face today.



Experts



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1. Simplifying Government Services

From KTP applications to document renewals, Sahabat AI offers instant guidance to streamline traditionally complex processes.

2. Demystifying Taxation

Whether calculating municipal taxes or understanding exemptions, Sahabat AI makes navigating Indonesia's tax system clear and accessible.

3. Streamlining Life Changes

Updating official documents after marriage, divorce, or relocation becomes hassle-free with Sahabat AI's personalised support.

4. Everyday Transactions Made Simple

Powering voice assistance features for Gojek and GoPay, Sahabat AI enables effortless ride-hailing and payments with just a voice command in any of the local languages. These initial examples showcase the immense potential of Sahabat AI. However, its real impact will depend on how businesses, governments, and developers move forward in building their tailored applications.

Here are examples of hidden opportunities that could transform industries, empower communities, and even drive Indonesia's rapid AI revolution further.

- **MSMEs: Localised Customer Engagement**

A coffee shop in Bandung could use Sahabat AI to automate customer interactions in Sundanese. A fully autonomous chatbot might handle reservations in Bahasa, share promotions, and answer inquiries efficiently while maintaining cultural relevance.

- **Education: Personalised and Inclusive Learning**

In a Sulawesi school, a teacher could build teaching assistants on Sahabat AI to translate the international syllabus into native languages, enabling students to access lessons inclusively. For broader adoption, ed-tech companies and the education ministry harness these local tools and invest in robust rural infrastructure to support digital learning.

- **Agriculture: Supporting Rural Farmers**

A farmer in Lampung could have his own farming co-pilot powered by Sahabat AI and receive pest control advice in Bahasa Lampung. They get immediate, actionable recommendations by simply typing and pointing the camera at an issue.

While these examples showcase what's achievable, realising these outcomes requires a robust ecosystem. Therefore, developers must adapt Sahabat AI for specific needs. These include government needs policies and infrastructure to encourage adoption. Communities also play a vital part, with their role being to integrate AI into daily workflows.

Change requires real effort

To fully realise Sahabat AI's potential, stakeholders must collaborate in the spirit of Gotong-Royong – build an ecosystem within this powerful platform that is now accessible to all.

1. Businesses should identify how Sahabat AI can drive value, such as automating customer service or optimising supply chains. Governments can leverage it to enhance public services like multilingual citizen engagement or urban planning. Clear, measurable objectives ensure effective deployment and measurable impact.
2. Developers must seek to adapt Sahabat AI continuously. While it can utilise Bahasa Indonesia, Sahabat AI should also be designed to reflect Indonesia's cultural and linguistic nuances in its applications.
3. As the main stakeholders, businesses should focus on organisation-wide training to maximise adoption and experimentation. Simultaneously, governments should aim to accelerate adoption through supportive policies that improve awareness of this technology and form partnerships with technology pioneers to democratise access further.
4. Piloting Sahabat AI in high-impact areas can ensure quick wins and build momentum for broader adoption. For example, deploying it in multilingual citizen engagement platforms or regional urban planning projects can demonstrate its value and adaptability. This can lead to a foundation for national-scale implementation.



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