

Conference Report

CTRL

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APAC

Tech and Journalism in the Global South

July 22-24, 2025
Jakarta

CTRL+J APAC was hosted in Jakarta, Indonesia from July 22 to 24, 2025 by Indonesian Cyber Media Association (AMSI), The Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) and the International Fund for Public Interest Media (IFPIM). The event was sponsored by IFPIM and Luminate.

The report was prepared by the Indonesian Cyber Media Association (AMSI), The Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) and the International Fund for Public Interest Media (IFPIM).



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Foreword

First of all, on behalf of the [Indonesian Cyber Media Association \(AMSI\)](#), the [Alliance of Independent Journalists \(AJI\)](#) in Indonesia and the [International Fund for Public Interest Media \(IFPIM\)](#), we would like to extend our deepest gratitude for the opportunity to host the CTRL+J APAC conference in July 2025. It was an honor for Indonesia to be chosen as the convening ground for this important regional dialogue—one that brings together journalists, media leaders, policymakers, researchers, and technology actors to collectively confront the most pressing challenges facing our information ecosystem today.

The CTRL+J conference series is anchored in the Global South, reflecting a deliberate and principled choice to let the regions most affected by technological disruption lead the global response. The CTRL+J APAC convening in Jakarta built on the momentum of the CTRL+J Latam edition in São Paulo, Brazil, and was followed by the CTRL+J Africa in Johannesburg, South Africa. We want this tri-continental dialogue to grow into cross-regional collaboration that will also evolve into a government-level task force among these countries—aligning policy coordination, sharing lessons, and strengthening collective capacity to ensure that our information ecosystems remain robust, independent, and grounded in the highest standards of integrity.

Over three intensive days in Jakarta, we witnessed how collaboration and shared purpose can crystallize into clear directions for action. Discussions and workshops led by experts from thirteen countries helped us identify key strategies for the region's next steps. We are grateful that these exchanges have resulted in tangible takeaways and a joint commitment to follow through across three essential fronts.

First, preparing our media ecosystem for technological adaptation in the AI era, ensuring that our newsrooms have the capacity, literacy, and infrastructure to engage with emerging tools responsibly. **Second**, building new business models and commercial products that secure journalism's sustainability beyond advertising dependence, including exploring new paradigms such as the Business-to-AI-to-Consumer (B2A2C) model. **Third**, advancing regulatory and policy frameworks that safeguard editorial independence, promote fair compensation for journalistic content, and anchor AI governance firmly in human rights principles.

The success of CTRL+J APAC 2025 is a shared achievement. It demonstrates that the Global South can lead with both moral clarity and strategic foresight in shaping the digital future. We thank all the participants and partners whose insights and energy made this possible, and we reaffirm our commitment to continue this collaboration—so that journalism remains a public good, serving democracy and the public interest in the age of artificial intelligence.

Wahyu Dhyatmika

Chairperson of AMSI

Nany Afrida

Chairperson of AJI

Irene Jay Liu

Director, AI, Emerging Tech & Regulation at IFPIM

Introduction

From July 22-24, 2025, leading voices from across the Asia Pacific region and beyond gathered in Jakarta to examine the challenges and opportunities for sustaining journalism in the era of emerging technology and artificial intelligence (AI). Over three days, the program moved from envisioning the future of media and diagnosing challenges in the APAC region to examining emerging responses, technological preparedness, and regional action plans. The convening built on the insights gathered during the [CTRL+J Latam](#) conference in Brazil (São Paulo, March 20-22, 2025) and preceded [CTRL+J Africa](#) (Johannesburg, September 3-5) and [CTRL+J International](#) (Kuala Lumpur, November 19).

The urgency of the conference in Jakarta was underscored by the structural economic collapse facing independent media. As already [noted](#) at the CTRL+J Latam event, the moment demands more than diagnosis; it requires a collective focus on solutions that enable the media to look to the future, rather than just "applying small patches that ensure our survival." Amid economic uncertainty, the proliferation of misinformation, and the profound asymmetry of power with dominant digital platforms, how journalism can continue to sustain reliable information and evolve is a core challenge of our time.

Nezar Patria, Indonesia's Deputy Minister of Communication and Digital, said in his opening remarks that: "CTRL+J signifies our collective commitment to shared learning, innovation, and developing joint agendas. The challenges are too vast for any single entity to tackle alone. Your presence is critical: diverse stakeholders are essential for collaborative solutions." This tri-continental initiative was precisely designed to foster cross-country collaboration and strategic discussion. The focus on hosting events across the Global South makes a powerful political statement: that regions most severely affected by technological disruption must collaboratively lead efforts to define the future of information and democratic digital governance.

"CTRL+J signifies our collective commitment to shared learning, innovation, and developing joint agendas. The challenges are too vast for any single entity to tackle alone."

– Nezar Patria, Deputy Minister of Communication and Digital of Indonesia

CTRL+J APAC contributed to strengthening the capacity and solidarity of Global South media in navigating the AI era through three main objectives:

1. To establish an **equitable framework for journalism in the AI era**, emphasizing quality curation, verification, and fair compensation. Building on Indonesia's Publisher Rights Regulation and global models, participants discussed mandatory and transparent mechanisms to ensure fair revenue sharing for all publishers.
2. To strengthen **collective bargaining power and technological sovereignty**, by fostering regional alliances, securing publisher data from AI scraping, and investing in local-language AI models such as SEA-Lion and SahabatAI to advance informational autonomy.
3. To foster **collaborative ecosystems for AI-enabled journalism**, encouraging cross-sector partnerships to co-create AI tools that serve public-interest journalism and respect linguistic and cultural diversity.

Participation

CTRL+J APAC successfully mobilized a diverse, tri-continental audience:

- ▶ 128 participants from across sectors: media, civil society, academia, government, and technology
- ▶ 39 speakers
- ▶ 13 countries represented, including Indonesia, Malaysia, Cambodia, India, Australia, South Africa, Brazil, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, the Philippines, Thailand, and Timor-Leste



CTRL+J APAC kickstarted in Jakarta on Tuesday, July 22, 2025, with an opening session featuring Arkka Dhiratara (Technology and Information Division, AMSI), Nani Afrida (President of AJI Indonesia), and Ivy Ong (Director for Asia & Pacific, IFPIM).

Overview of Discussions

1. Keynote Speech:

- ▶ Nezar Patria, Vice-Minister of Communication and Digital Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia

Nezar Patria officially opened the conference. He highlighted the dual nature of AI: it offers potential for enhanced efficiency (streamlining tasks from data analysis to content generation) and expanded reach (personalizing content delivery to targeted audiences), and can unlock new forms of storytelling.

But he also cautioned that AI can accelerate the creation and spread of false or misleading information. Patria emphasized that ensuring fair compensation for journalistic work is a critical issue as AI further strains the financial models of news organizations. He provided economic context, noting that the advertising economy in APAC grew by +7.9% in 2024 to \$288 billion, but traditional media owners saw flat growth, reaching only \$68 billion (24 percent), while digital pure player publishers grew by +10.5% to reach \$220 billion (76 percent).



Nezar Patria, Vice-Minister of Communication and Digital Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, delivered a keynote speech at the CTRL+J APAC conference. The presentation slide behind him includes the following text and icons:

AI-Generated Content: Questions of authenticity, bias, and accountability of AI.

Rise on News Organizations: The rise of AI and the shift in how information is consumed in the financial models of traditional news organizations.

AI for Journalistic Work: In a landscape shaped by AI, ensuring that journalists are fairly compensated for their original work becomes a critical issue.

Overall APAC growth of +7.9% in 2024 consisted of traditional media owners seeing flat growth to reach \$68 billion (24% of budgets).

Digital pure player publishers seeing growth of +10.5% to reach \$220 billion (76% of budgets).

Television budgets were slightly negative in 2024, shrinking by 1%.

Deputy Minister of Digital and Communication of the Republic of Indonesia, Nezar Patria, delivered the keynote speech at CTRL+J APAC in Jakarta on 22 July 2025, highlighting the challenges and opportunities for Indonesian journalism amid digital disruption.

2. Panel 1: Shaping the Global Debate: From Johannesburg, São Paulo, to Jakarta

- ▶ Michael Markovitz, Director, Media Leadership Think Tank, Gordon Institute of Business Science, South Africa
- ▶ Maia Fortes, Executive Director, Associação de Jornalismo Digital (AJOR), Brazil
- ▶ Wahyu Dhyatmika, Chairperson of Indonesian Cyber Media Association (AMSI), Indonesia
- ▶ Moderated by Irene Jay Liu, Director, AI, Emerging Tech and Regulation at IFPIM

This opening panel provided a snapshot of lessons learned from previous conferences in Johannesburg and São Paulo, emphasizing the urgency and opportunities for collective action in the Global South. Michael Markovitz (GIBS Media Leadership Think Tank) argued that journalism is an essential public good facing a market failure because the economic model cannot sustain it. He advocated for addressing the root causes: anti-competitive conduct and the non-transparent algorithmic systems designed by Big Tech, which treat news as tradable commodities. He stressed that regulations must prioritize human rights and free speech, not state control.



Wahyu Dhyatmika, Chairperson of AMSI, delivers his remarks during Panel 1 titled "Shaping the Global Debate: From Johannesburg, São Paulo, to Jakarta," which discussed shared challenges and opportunities in global journalism in the era of AI.

Wahyu Dhyatmika (AMSI) focused on the acute power asymmetry, revealing that almost 30 percent of website traffic in most of AMSI members comes from bots (like ChatGPT) which consume resources, forcing media to pay for bigger infrastructure capacities without compensation. He noted that “media need sustainable, multi-stakeholder support to stay independent and uphold quality journalism in an AI-driven era.” Maia Fortes (AJOR Brazil) reinforced the need for technological autonomy and fair compensation mechanisms that are mandatory, transparent, and redistributive: “AI must be regulated so its impact strengthens the digital journalism ecosystem.”

“Media need sustainable, multi-stakeholder support to stay independent and uphold quality journalism in an AI-driven era.”

3. Brief Presentation of Feasibility Study on Indonesian Journalism Fund and Handover Ceremony

- ▶ Masduki, Chairperson of Pemantau Regulasi dan Regulator Media (PR2MEDIA)
- ▶ Dahlan Dahi, Chair of the Digital and Sustainability Commission, Indonesian Press Council

Masduki (PR2MEDIA) presented the Feasibility Study on the Establishment of Journalism Fund in Indonesia (published in Bahasa Indonesia [here](#)), stating that Indonesia is at a critical time for finding sustainable funding for independent journalism. All stakeholders involved in the study agreed that a sound journalism ecosystem fund is needed, ideally requiring state budget allocation.

Masduki warned that the mechanism must ensure independence from state intervention, due to the legacy of the autocratic Soeharto era, and also raised the dilemma of accepting funding from corporations without allowing intervention in reporting. The study called for the urgent establishment of the fund, cemented by Presidential and Ministerial regulations, though policymaking in Indonesia is recognized as a lengthy process. The study was formally handed over to the Indonesian Press Council, represented by one of its commissioners: Dahlan Dahi.

“Indonesia needs a regulated public journalism endowment now, yet our policymaking process remains painfully slow.”

– Masduki, Chairperson of Pemantau Regulasi dan Regulator Media (PR2MEDIA)



Masduki, Chairperson of PR2Media, delivered a presentation on the Feasibility Study on the Indonesian Journalism Fund



From left to right: Irene Jay Liu (Director, AI, Emerging Tech & Regulation, IFPIM), Dahlan Dahi (Chairperson of the Digital & Sustainability Commission, Press Council), Nezar Patria (Minister of Communication and Digital Affairs), and Masduki (Chairperson of PR2Media) pose after the symbolic handover of PR2Media's research report titled "Feasibility Study for Establishing a Journalism Fund in Indonesia" during the CTRL+J APAC 2025 conference in Jakarta on 22 July 2025.

4. Panel 2: Envisioning the Future of News Content and Storytelling in the Era of AI

- ▶ Jaemark Tordecilla, Independent Media Advisor (Provocateur)
- ▶ Peerapon Anutarasoat, Director, Thai News Agency's Sure and Share Centre
- ▶ Nenden Arum, Executive Director, SAFEnet
- ▶ Kuek Ser Kuang Keng, Data Editor, Pulitzer Center
- ▶ Moderated by Devi Asmarani, Co-founder and Chief Editor, Magdalene.co

Moderated by Devi Asmarani (magdalene.co), this session focused on the future of news content and storytelling. In his provocation, Jaemark Tordecilla (Independent Media Advisor) highlighted that 55 percent of Philippine audiences prefer watching news videos over reading or listening. He demonstrated AI's use in turning a 4,000-word investigative feature on military torture into an animation (complete with voice-overs and music) in two days, though this sparked backlash from illustrators worried about job displacement.

Kuek Ser Kuang Keng (Pulitzer Center) stressed that AI tools are not always accurate, citing a failure to correctly map school coordinates in Brazil. He emphasized that basic journalistic skills like verification and fact-checking are still important: "AI can help us work faster, but it still fabricates information. That's why verification and transparency remain non-negotiable in journalism." Tordecilla also reinforced the important function of journalists: "AI can surface patterns and anomalies in seconds, but it cannot explain causes, intent, or accountability — that's where journalists must step in," he noted.

Nenden Arum (SAFEnet) warned that AI datasets are often biased toward dominant language and locations (e.g., Jakarta data), leading to the underrepresentation of regional languages and groups. She also detailed the human rights risk posed by platforms using shadowbanning to censor "politically sensitive" content. Peerapon Anutrasoat (Sure And Share Centre) questioned whether AI should run newsrooms, drawing a parallel to the decline in pilots' skills due to over-reliance on automation.

“AI can surface patterns and anomalies in seconds, but it cannot explain causes, intent, or accountability – that’s where journalists must step in.”

*- Jaemark Tordecilla,
Independent Media Advisor*



Panel 2 focused on the theme "Envisioning the Future of News Content and Storytelling in the Era of AI," featuring speakers with diverse international backgrounds: Jaemarn Tordecilla (Independent Media Advisor), Peeraporn Anutarasat (Director, Sure and Share Centre, Thai News Agency), Nenden Arum (Executive Director, SAFENet), and Kuek Ser Kuang Keng (Data Editor, Pulitzer Center). The discussion offered engaging insights and diverse perspectives on the future of news content and storytelling practices amid the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence technologies.

5. Panel 3: Envisioning the Future of Media and Tech in the Era of AI in Asia-Pacific

- ▶ Premesh Chandran, Co founder of Malaysiakini & Avatar Innovations (Provocateur)
- ▶ Shuwei Fang, Joan Shorenstein Fellow at Harvard Kennedy School's Shorenstein Center on Media
- ▶ Kuek Ser Kuang Keng, Data Editor, Pulitzer Center
- ▶ Shita Laksmi, Digital Governance Consultant in Indonesia
- ▶ Moderated by Prodita Sabarini, CEO, The Conversation Indonesia



Panel 3, titled "Envisioning the Future of Media and Tech in the Era of AI in Asia Pacific," featured Premesh Chandran (Malaysiakini.com & Awatar Innovation), who joined online as the provocateur, with respondents Shuwei Fang (Harvard Kennedy School), Kuek Ser Kuang Keng (Pulitzer Center), and Shita Laksmi (Digital Governance Consultant). Moderated by Prodita Sabarini (CEO, The Conversation Indonesia), the session was dynamic and drew active participation from the audience.

This panel, moderated by Prodita Sabarini (CEO of The Conversation Indonesia), focused on regional survival strategies. Premesh Chandran (co-founder of Malaysiakini & Awatar Innovations) warned that the proliferation of AI-generated content will rapidly increase the challenge of verifying authenticity: “Media must brace for a surge of AI content — without AI-ready teams and shared tech platforms, we won’t keep pace.” He urged Asian media to build dedicated AI teams and explore federated technology platforms: “Can media in Asia not just survive, but forge its own path?... We must define the next era of journalism, leading the global discourse... I see the diversity of Asia being our strength.”

Kuek Ser Kuang Keng reiterated the severe economic impact, reporting that local media's website traffic in Indonesia had dropped by almost 50 percent, resulting in mass layoffs in 2024. He noted that many AI companies are proactively offering to buy or license content from media organizations for money.

"Can media in Asia not just survive, but forge its own path?... We must define the next era of journalism, leading the global discourse... I see the diversity of Asia being our strength."

- Premesh Chandran, Co founder of Malaysiakini & Avatar Innovations



One of the participants, Ana Lomtadze (Programme Specialist, Communications & Informations of UNESCO Jakarta Office) takes part in the discussion during the CTRL+J APAC Conference in Jakarta.

Shuwei Fang (Harvard Kennedy School researcher) encouraged small media in Indonesia to track how AI consumes their content and collect the critical questions raised directly by their audiences (e.g., via WhatsApp groups) to better define their unique value proposition. Shita Laksmi (Digital Governance Consultant, Indonesia) also urged the media to take a harder look at their value proposition: "It's time to start asking some pretty difficult questions about your unique value and core business. So, what problem are you solving for the audience?" She suggested using forums like the World Summit of Information Society (WSIS) to build collective power and learn policy best practices, noting that 14 countries (mostly advanced nations like Japan and France) have developed AI policies after joining the summit.

"It's time to start asking some pretty difficult questions about your unique value and core business. So, what problem are you solving for the audience?"

- *Shita Laksmi, Digital Governance Consultant in Indonesia*

6. Panel 4: Envisioning the Future of Media in the Era of AI and Tech: An Overview

- ▶ Shuwei Fang, Joan Shorenstein Fellow at Harvard Kennedy School's Shorenstein Center on Media (Provocateur)
- ▶ Arul Prakkash Sinnappan, Expert on Video and Technology for Human Rights
- ▶ Jaemark Tordecilla, Independent Media Advisor
- ▶ Andy Budiman, CEO, KG Media
- ▶ Moderated by Citra Prastuti, Chief Editor, KBR Media

Moderated by Citra Prastuti (Chief Editor of KBR Media), this session focused on potential scenarios and economic shifts. Shuwei Fang introduced the Business-to-AI-to-Consumer (B2A2C) paradigm. She stressed that AI agents function as information consumers and translators, and the power lies in this "translation layer" where AI decides how content is framed. Shuwei Fang noted optimism on the B2A side because AI is always hungry for information and content: "Stop just thinking about how to use AI and start thinking about what AI wants from you."

“Stop just thinking about how to use AI and start thinking about what AI wants from you.”

- Shuwei Fang, Joan Shorenstein Fellow at Harvard Kennedy School's Shorenstein Center on Media

Andy Budiman (KG Media CEO, Indonesia) confirmed his website traffic had dropped significantly since AI Overviews launched: "We have noticed for the past few months that our traffic is going down almost by 50 percent. Volume now means nothing because we are losing this race, the race to the bottom, that AI is capable of generating volume very, very quickly. So, we must focus on original and high-quality content." He argued that media's core value is the curation of content and information, not volume, which offsets value loss but leads to an "AI dystopia of too much junk information."

Jaemark Tordecilla highlighted the conflict between media management (which avoids non-monetizing platforms like TikTok) and journalists who use them to counteract distorted public narratives. Arul Prakash Sinnappan (Expert on Video and Technology for Human Rights) warned about AI being used to create deepfake contents (like videos featuring "Soeharto's ghost" during the 2024 Indonesian elections) to manipulate the masses.

"We have noticed for the past few months that our traffic is going down almost by 50% [since Google AI Overview launched]. Volume now means nothing because we are losing this race, the race to the bottom, that AI is capable to generate volume very, very quickly. So, we must focus on original and high-quality content... our core value is the curation of the content, of the information, not the volume."

- *Andy Budiman, CEO of KG Media*



Andy Budiman, CEO of KG Media, responds to a participant's question as one of the couch respondents during the CTRL+J APAC Conference in Jakarta.

7. Panel 5: Preparing the Future: The State of Play in APAC

- ▶ [Elina Noor](#), Senior Fellow in the Asia Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
- ▶ [Irendra Radjawali](#), Associate Researcher, CSEAS Kyoto University
- ▶ [Jacque Manabat](#), Multimedia Journalist, The Philippines
- ▶ Moderated by [Sita Dewi](#), Co-Founder of Project Multatuli

This [session](#), moderated by Sita Dewi (Project Multatuli), addressed the impact of geopolitics and shifting user behaviors in the region. Elina Noor (Carnegie Endowment researcher) talked about the increasing market concentration across the vertical stack of digital infrastructure and the services that are being provided by big tech companies, which creates dependencies in the region. She also highlighted the Western bias in platform practices, as seen in the shadowbanning of content related to sensitive topics (e.g., [Palestine](#)). She detailed the limitations of LLMs, noting they lack the intuitive knowledge of specific contexts that human beings possess, demanding journalists apply reasoning skills.

Jacque Manabat (Multimedia Journalist, The Philippines) shared her success as a "newsfluencer" on TikTok, delivering current affairs contents "like a friend" to Millennials and Gen Z while strictly maintaining journalistic ethics and verification. She argued that: "Journalism must 'evolve or die.' I proved it by pioneering vertical infotainment on TikTok. We made news relevant to youth, spurred action, and showed press ethics can thrive on any platform."

Elina Noor urged Southeast Asian countries to align their competitive advantages to negotiate collectively with Big Tech, resisting the "divide and conquer" strategy. Irendra Radjawali (Associate Researcher, CSEAS Kyoto University based in Indonesia) noted that Indonesians spend 7 hours 45 minutes daily on the internet and over 3 hours on social media. She warned that AI data is highly biased due to Western programmer dominance: "We fight 'data fetishism' by training indigenous communities to build DIY drones and their own maps. This 'paradata' empowers them to challenge official government figures, proving that collective intelligence is the true force behind Artificial Intelligence."

"Journalism must 'evolve or die.' I proved it by pioneering vertical infotainment on TikTok. We made news relevant to youth, spurred action, and showed press ethics can thrive on any platform."

– Jacque Manabat, Multimedia Journalist, The Philippines



Group photo at the end of Panel 5, "Preparing the Future: The State of Play in APAC". From left to right: moderator Sita Dewi (Project Multatuli) with panelists Jacque Manabat (Multimedia Journalist, The Philippines), Elina Noor (Senior Fellow, Asia Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), and Irendra Radjawali (Associate Researcher, CSEAS Kyoto University).

8. Panel 6: Preparing the Future: Compensation Strategies

- ▶ Paula Fray, Panel Member, South African Competition Commission's Media and Digital Platforms Market Inquiry
- ▶ Indri D. Saptaningrum, Vice Chair, Indonesia Publishers Rights Committee
- ▶ Nelson Yap, Co-Chair, Public Interest Publishers Alliance (PIPA), Australia
- ▶ Moderated by Evi Mariani, Co-founder and Executive Director, Project Multatuli

Moderated by Evi Mariani (Publisher of Project Multatuli), this panel examined international compensation mechanisms. Nelson Yap (Public Interest Publishers Alliance, Australia) joined virtually to talk about the experience of Australia's News Bargaining Code (NBI), which mandates negotiations and recognizes journalism as a critical public infrastructure, backed by \$99.1 million in government grants for news organizations over three years. He warned that AI companies are learning tactics from Big Tech to resist regulation and noted that the U.S. had threatened tariffs against nations regulating tech.

Indri D. Saptaningrum (Indonesia Publishers Rights Committee) highlighted the severe power asymmetry in Indonesia, where media are highly dependent on platforms for traffic, making fair negotiation challenging. Paula Fray (South African Competition Commission) proposed policy alternatives such as tax breaks for media companies and mechanisms for media to opt out of AI summaries without losing search visibility.



Panel 6, held in a hybrid format, discussed the theme "Preparing the Future: Compensation Strategies", featured Paula Fray (South African Competition Commission), Indri D. Saptaningrum (Indonesia Publisher Rights Committee), and Nelson Yap (Public Interest Publishers Alliance Australia, joined online). Moderated by Evi Mariani (Project Multatuli), the session discussed compensation strategies for future media challenges.

9. Panel 7: Amplifying Diverse Voices and Addressing the Language Barrier in AI

- ▶ Dr. Leslie Teo, Senior Director of AI Products, AI Singapore
- ▶ Ayu Purwarianti, Researcher of the AI Center, Bandung Institute of Technology
- ▶ Shalini Joshi, Program Director for Training and Network, MEEDAN
- ▶ Endang Aminuddin Azis, Professor of Linguistics, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia
- ▶ Moderated by Elina Noor, Senior Fellow, Asia Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

"For [citizens] to truly benefit, they need to adopt it, feel that it's part of them, and for that to happen, the AI needs to look like them. It needs to look like them culturally, linguistically, and even the context of the data itself."

- *Leslie Teo, Senior Director of AI Products, AI Singapore*

Shalini Joshi (Meedan, based in India) reported that their fact-checking tools, Check, are available in 31 Asian languages and work with media and civil society organizations. Ayu Purwarianti (Institut Teknologi Bandung, Indonesia) presented the Nusa Dialogue project, which uses native regional speakers to annotate data on regional languages and dialects for LLMs, aiming to prevent bias.

Endang Aminuddin Azis (Professor of Linguistics of Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia) noted that Indonesia has 718 local languages, many of which are endangered, and warned that AI datasets are often limited to the secondary, written form of language, missing vital cultural context. “Sometimes they [AI developers] only rely on the intuition as the native speaker intuition of the developers, not the insights from the local language scientists. And this is sometimes misleading, especially when we talk about the phonological system and also the pragmatic aspect of the language,” he noted.



Held in a hybrid format, Panel 7 featured Dr. Leslie Teo (AI SG, joining online), Ayu Purwarianti (Institut Teknologi Bandung), Shailini Joshi (MEEDAN), and Endang Aminuddin Azis (Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia). The session discussed how to amplify diverse voices and overcome language barriers in the development of AI.

This session, moderated by Elina Noor, addressed the imperative for linguistic inclusivity. Dr. Leslie Teo (AI SG, Singapore) (via recorded video) introduced SEA-Lion, a large language model designed specifically for "low resource" Southeast Asian languages, such as Javanese and Ambonese, to counter cultural misrepresentation and Western bias. He argued that "For [citizens] to truly benefit, they need to adopt it, feel that it's part of them, and for that to happen, the AI needs to look like them. It needs to look like them culturally, linguistically, and even the context of the data itself."



The atmosphere during one of the
CTRL+J discussion sessions.

10. Fireside Chat: Building Homegrown Tech and Reshaping the Relationship between Publishers and Tech

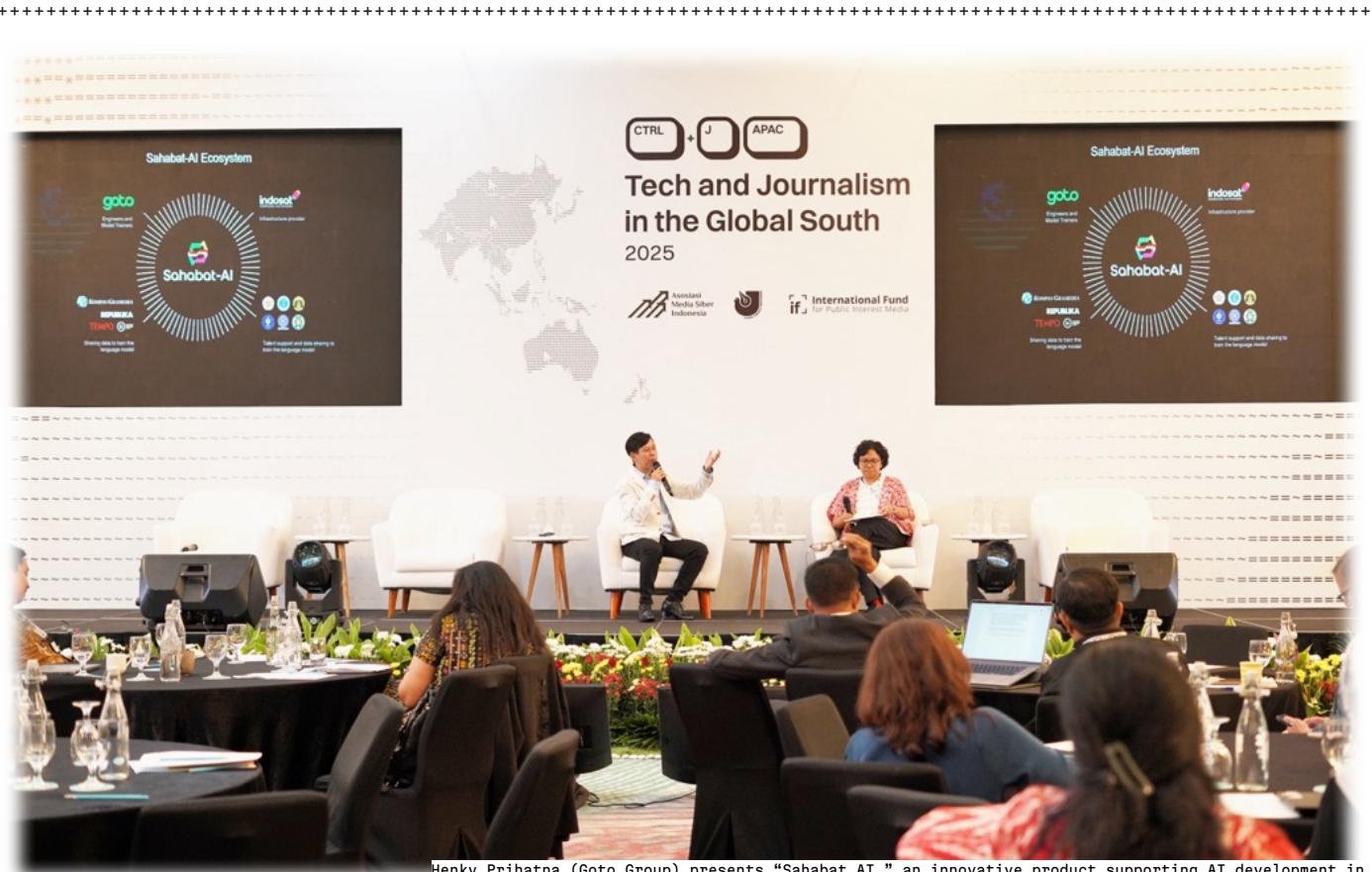
- ▶ Henky Prihatna, Head of Partnership, GoTo Group
- ▶ Interviewed by Citra Prastuti, Chief Editor, KBR Media

Interviewed by Citra Prastuti (KBR Media), Henky Prihatna (Head of Partnerships at GoTo Group, Indonesia) discussed the launch of the open-source local AI platform SahabatAI. This tool was created because researchers found many missing links in global LLMs regarding local contexts, and the model failed to represent Indonesian language and regional dialects, despite Indonesia's vast digital potential.

Supported by the Indonesian Ministry of Communication and Digital (KOMDIGI), the LLM was built through strategic partnerships: Indonesian telco Indosat provided expensive infrastructure, and major media partners (Tempo, Republika, Hukumonline, Kompas Gramedia) supplied credible data for training the tool.

Henky confirmed that GoTo does not crawl their websites; the content is used ethically for analysis (like analyzing public sentiments), rather than simple scraping.

Not only media organizations, the Sahabat-AI initiative also involves universities such as the University of Indonesia (UI), Gadjah Mada University (UGM), Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB), Udayana University (UNUD), Bogor Agricultural University (IPB), and the University of North Sumatra (USU). Students from these campuses are invited to collaborate in the development process alongside GoTo's technical team, making Sahabat-AI a product of collective effort (gotong royong) between the private sector, the media, and universities.



Henky Prihatna (Goto Group) presents "Sahabat AI," an innovative product supporting AI development in Indonesia, in a fireside chat with Citra Dyah Prastuti (Editor in Chief KBR Media).

11. Lightning Talks: How Media & Tech in APAC are Adapting to the Era of AI

- ▶ Eshwaren Manoharen, Co-founder and Chief Technology Officer, Awatar Malaysia
- ▶ Arkka Dhiratara, CEO, HukumOnline.com
- ▶ Sim Leo Lioi, Deputy Executive Editor, Star Media Malaysia
- ▶ Omar Abdillah, Leader of Product and Data Division, Kompas Gramedia Group
- ▶ Francis Ochoa, Sports Editor, The Philippine Daily Inquirer

This session featuring short talks showcasing practical innovations:

- ▶ Eshwaren Manoharen (Awatar Malaysia) presented Atlas, an AI tool that assists journalists with data management, topic modeling, and audio-to-text transcription, freeing them to focus on creative tasks like narrative crafting.

"We are pioneering 'vibe journalism' with our regional AI, Atlas. Journalists now focus on the narrative, while AI handles the tedious processes. We prove the future of APAC journalism is being built from within."

– Eshwaren Manoharen, Co-founder and Chief Technology Officer, Awatar Malaysia

- ▶ Arkka Dhiratara (CEO of HukumOnline, Indonesia) showcased Allex, an AI tool specializing in Indonesian legal intelligence and database management, crucial given that over 33,000 new regulations may be issued annually.

"Facing 300,000 regulations, AI Lex digests colossal legal data and provides answers with valid article citations. This niche solution raised our B2B subscription revenue."

– Arkka Dhiratara, CEO of HukumOnline.com

- ▶ Sim Leo Lioi (Star Media, Malaysia) detailed The Star's use of AI primarily for efficiency (image/voiceover creation and transcription), emphasizing that all AI uses are clearly labeled and red-flagged to editors to ensure quality control.
- ▶ Omar Abdillah (Kompas Gramedia Group, Indonesia) talked about the use of AI to monitor editorial content related to divisive topics and highlighted a speed-reading feature that resulted in five times higher engagement.
- ▶ Francis Ochoa (The Philippine Daily Inquirer) described The Elves AI tools which helps journalists analyze data like financial statements and election results to spot patterns and inconsistencies, enriching layered articles.



From left to right: Eshwaren Manoharen (Awatar, Malaysia), Sim Leo Lioi (The Star, Malaysia), Arkka Dhiratara (Hukum Online, Indonesia), Omar Abdillah (KG Media, Indonesia), and Francis Ochoa (The Philippine Daily Inquirer) – media experts and technologists from across APAC discussing how media and tech are adapting to the era of AI.

12. Panel 8: Preparing for the Future: Publishers' Preparedness & Engagement Strategy in the Era of AI

- ▶ Sérgio Spagnuolo, Co-founder and Executive Director, Núcleo Jornalismo, Brazil
- ▶ Matt Prewitt, President, RadicalxChange Foundation, US
- ▶ Moderated by Ika Idris, Associate Professor at Public Policy & Management Program, Monash University Jakarta

Moderated by Ika Idris (Monash University Jakarta), this panel focused on technical defense. Sérgio Spagnuolo (Núcleo Jornalismo, Brazil) identified a critical vulnerability: only 5–6 percent of Indonesian and Brazilian media sites block AI agents via their robots.txt file, compared with 35 percent of U.S. sites. He announced a forthcoming tool to help publishers generate these protective files.

“Preparedness in the AI era begins with defense. Before any value can be fought for, publishers must first close the protocol gap and safeguard their data resources for quality information to endure in the future.”

- *Sergio Spagnuolo, Co-founder and Executive Director, Nucleo Jornalismo, Brazil*

Matt Prewitt (RadicalxChange Foundation, U.S.) emphasized that journalists must actively organize to negotiate AI access and licensing; failure to secure control over content access will erode media revenue. He offered a new digital infrastructure framework based on data sites provided by OpenMined.

"In the AI marketplace, acting alone makes publishers vulnerable. The future of quality information will be won by those who act collectively, building a strong bargaining position to ensure valuable content receives fair compensation."

- Matt Prewitt, President of RadicalxChange Foundation, U.S.



Panel 8, titled 'Preparing for the Future: Publishers' Preparedness and Engagement Strategy in the Era of AI,' featured Sergio Spagnulo (Nucleo Jornalismo) and Matt Prewitt (RadicalxChange Foundation). Moderated by Ika Idris from Monash University Jakarta, this session served as a compelling conclusion to the second day of discussions. The conversation offered fresh insights into how publishers can proactively navigate the evolving landscape shaped by artificial intelligence.

13. Panel 9: What the Future Looks Like from Tech Companies and Platforms' Perspectives

- ▶ Anggini Setiawan, Communications Director, TikTok Indonesia
- ▶ Farooq Sheikh, Global Head of Financial Services, Cloudflare
- ▶ Ajar Edi, Senior Vice President of Regulatory & Government Affairs, PT Indosat
- ▶ Moderated by Wahyu Dhyatmika, Chairperson, AMSI

This off-the-record roundtable, moderated by Wahyu Dhyatmika (AMSI), featured insights from major tech companies. Panellists discussed a range of responses – from giving publishers more control and monetization opportunities to increasing trust and transparency through mandatory labelling of AI-generated content. Interventions also highlighted AI's potential to drive economic opportunities and the importance of building strong national AI infrastructure.

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Regional Workshops

The final day focused on developing priorities and actionable roadmaps.

- ▶ **Indonesia Case: Legal Frameworks and Sustainability** (Facilitators: Wahyu Dhyatmika, Arkka Dhiratara, Ika Ningtyas): This group focused on strengthening the legal framework to protect news content from being crawled and scraped. Key actions proposed included creating a single portal with mandatory login for AMSI members to protect content from AI tools; designing a content inventory and rate card for B2A agreements; and establishing an AI governance task force to create practical guidelines and provide training due to low tech literacy among media practitioners.



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- ▶ **From Vision to Action: Ideal Information Ecosystem** (Facilitators: Trinna Leong and Jessica White): The group identified deficits in money and skills as the biggest challenges. Solutions included diversifying content toward underrepresented issues and public interest; lobbying the government for tax breaks or subsidies for media companies; and advocating for government provision of affordable/free data service centers and internet services to support news production.



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- ▶ **Global South Collaboration: Network Across Borders** (Facilitators: Irene Jay Liu and Ivy Ong): This group sought similarities across Latam, APAC, and Africa. Solutions included tailoring capacity building to regional contexts; promoting inclusivity of access to AI tools for low-resource communities; conducting data-supported research for advocacy purposes; and formalizing a long-term advocacy network proposed as GPS ALL (the Global South Alliance). The group also suggested creating a news lab for the Global South alliance to experiment with technology owned by the industry, free from third-party intervention.



All participants were divided into three discussion groups, each focusing on a different topic: Indonesia Case, From Vision to Action, and Global South Collaboration. After the discussions, each group appointed a representative to present their findings to the larger audience, highlighting the solutions and strategic recommendations that had been collaboratively formulated.

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Key Themes

The detailed discussions converged on six interconnected themes, essential for the resilience and ethical development of journalism and technology in the Global South.

1. Journalism is a Public Good Facing Structural Market Failure

The foundational consensus was that journalism is an essential public good that cannot be sustained by market forces alone, leading to a profound market failure. This failure is exacerbated by the advertising collapse, where big platforms capture most of the available revenue from online advertising, a phenomenon mirrored and amplified in the Global South/APAC region. In Indonesia, the dominance is especially severe: of the estimated IDR 107.291 trillion

in national advertising spending in 2024, digital advertising commands 44.1%. Within this digital space, Google and Facebook control an overwhelming 75-80% of the total national digital advertising revenue. This effective duopoly severely challenges the financial existence of mainstream media. This necessitates structural protection, including policy reforms that link public funds to rule-of-law performance and compel state support. The proposed solution in Indonesia—establishing a public journalism endowment fund—is critical, provided that mechanisms are implemented to prevent state intervention and safeguard editorial independence.

2. Acute Structural Dependence and Algorithmic Gatekeeping

The power imbalance in the information ecosystem is systemic, defined by algorithmic governance that dictates reach and prioritizes engagement, not newsworthiness. Platforms shape what audiences see, reinforcing filter bubbles and eroding editorial control.

This dependence translates into severe economic damage in the AI era: local media reported traffic losses of up to 50 percent since AI tools launched, and AI bot crawlers consume almost 30 percent of website traffic, imposing infrastructure costs without compensation. This structural issue demands that media organizations prioritize curation and quality over merely offsetting losses by producing higher volumes of content.

3. The Strategic Imperative of the B2A2C Model

The conference raised the Business-to-AI-to-Consumer (B2A2C) model as a critical new revenue stream. In this model, AI agents become "information consumers and translators". For successful B2A2C adoption, publishers must fulfill strict requirements:

- ▶ Infrastructure: Develop machine-readable content with rich metadata and APIs for programmatic access.
- ▶ Legal & Ethical: Negotiate clear contracts for data use, revenue sharing, and liability. Maintain editorial oversight and transparency over algorithmic curation and content provenance.
- ▶ Business: Secure fair revenue-sharing deals and continue diversifying revenue through subscriptions, data and research providers, events, and philanthropic partnerships.

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4. Technological Autonomy and the Fight Against Bias

AI models trained predominantly on Western data exhibit systemic bias, failing to account for local contexts and underrepresenting the vast linguistic diversity of the Global South (Indonesia alone has 718 local languages). To achieve technological autonomy, participants advocated for:

- ▶ Homegrown LLMs: Supporting local initiatives like SEA-Lion (for low-resource languages) and SahabatAI (which avoids scraping and uses credible local data).
- ▶ Technical Defense: Implementing publisher controls, as demonstrated by Cloudflare's default AI bot block and the Pay-per-Crawl marketplace, or data sites infrastructure offered by OpenMined, allowing publishers to monetize bot access based on granular permissions.

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5. Compensation Must Be Mandatory, Transparent, and Redistributive

Financial fixes based on voluntary copyright or individual deals are insufficient. Speakers argued for mandatory mechanisms, citing examples such as Australia's News Media Bargaining Code and Canada's Online News Act, which compel platforms to pay for news. There was consensus on moving toward a "third model" combining compulsory payments with mechanisms for equitable distribution to support pluralism and smaller, independent outlets.

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6. The Human Role and AI Governance

The rapid speed of AI disruption demands a clear delineation of human responsibility. While AI can automate tasks (used by 68 percent of media professionals for efficiency), it cannot replace human journalistic functions. Key recommendations included:

- ▶ Maintaining Human Control: Emphasizing that human journalists must always have the final decision on content creation and publication.
- ▶ Transparency: Honestly disclosing to audiences when AI tools have been used in production to maintain trust.
- ▶ Ethical Auditing: Actively auditing AI outputs for bias and misinformation.

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Ten Takeaways from CTRL+J APAC +++++++

1. Advocate for mandatory, redistributive compensation.

Policy advocacy should build upon Indonesia's Publisher Rights Presidential Regulation, strengthening it through various legislative processes. Drawing from global examples such as Australia's News Media Bargaining Code and Canada's Online News Act, Indonesia should establish a fair, transparent, and mandatory remuneration framework that ensures equitable revenue distribution, especially for smaller and regional outlets.

2. Achieve technological autonomy through homegrown solutions.

Counter the dominant Western bias by investing in and sustaining local-language LLMs (like SEA-Lion and SahabatAI) and technical infrastructure. This is essential for informational sovereignty and accurately representing the region's linguistic diversity.

3. Prioritize quality curation and verification.

Faced with massive traffic collapse (up to 50 percent) and the proliferation of low-quality content, news organizations must redefine their value proposition by focusing on curation, verification, and human judgment, rather than merely increasing production volume.

4. Embrace the B2A2C model strategically.

Publishers must proactively structure content with APIs and rich metadata to license their high-quality content to AI agents, leveraging the B2A2C paradigm to establish new revenue streams and ensure content is usable by machines.

5. Strengthen Global South solidarity for collective bargaining.

Due to the severe power asymmetry, publishers across the APAC, Latam, and African regions must build transnational alliances to align competitive advantages and exert meaningful leverage against global tech giants.

6. Urgently address publishers' technical vulnerability.

Media companies must improve their technical defense against AI bot consumption. This involves immediately addressing the fact that only 5-6 percent of Indonesian and Brazilian sites use robots.txt and utilizing tools like Cloudflare's Pay-per-Crawl marketplace or data sites infrastructure from OpenMined to regain granular control over bot monetization.

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7. Anchor AI governance in human rights.

Regulatory frameworks must demand transparency in algorithmic curation and content sourcing. Policies must actively combat AI bias against marginalized groups, defend free expression, and ensure regulation is not used as a covert tool for state control or censorship (such as shadowbanning).

8. Bridge the deficit in technical literacy.

A multi-stakeholder AI Governance Task Force should be established, involving representatives from the Indonesian Cyber Media Association (AMSI), the Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI), media editors, newsroom technologists, digital rights groups, fact-checking organizations, and academic experts in AI and media ethics. This task force would be responsible for drafting practical guidelines, coordinating capacity-building programs, and promoting ethical standards that ensure journalists understand AI capabilities, limitations, and the importance of human oversight.

9. Promote policy collaboration to support sustainable journalism.

Governments, media organizations and civil society should work together to ensure journalism is recognized and supported as essential public infrastructure. This can include policies such as tax incentives or subsidies, as well as investment in affordable and accessible digital infrastructure — from data service centers to reliable internet access — to help close funding gaps and strengthen the resilience of the media ecosystem.

10. Value local media as grounding data for LLMs.

Local media's original reporting, verification, and specific local context (hyperlocal news) is invaluable for training and grounding ethical, unbiased LLMs, reducing the risk of "hallucinations" and factual inaccuracies, thus strengthening the AI system itself.

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Next Steps and Conclusion

The CTRL+J APAC 2025 conference reinforced the message that reimagining the information ecosystem is not just necessary for survival, but essential for building a more resilient, plural, and just future for journalism in the AI age. It successfully generated a strong consensus on the urgent need to protect journalism as a public good and to formulate collaborative solutions that are context-specific and tailored to the Global South.

The conversations laid the groundwork for long-term strategies across the region. Through the active involvement of media, tech, and policy actors, the conference solidified the commitment that the Global South will not merely react to technological changes but will actively define where those shifts should lead. Collaborative regulation, inclusive innovation, and sustainable funding emerged as the core pillars for future action.

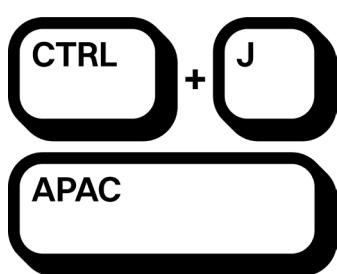
Based on emerging consensus from the conference, recommended next steps include:

- ▶ **Advancing legislative and funding mechanisms:** Building on feasibility study conducted by PR2Media, stakeholders must mobilize resources to establish a public journalism endowment fund, ensuring legal safeguards for editorial independence. Simultaneously, pursue legislation that mandates platforms to negotiate and share revenue.

- ▶ **Implementing publisher technical defense:** Publishers must immediately provide training and tools for newsrooms to implement robots.txt protocols and manage AI bot traffic effectively. AMSI members should explore implementing a single portal with mandatory login to protect content from unauthorized scraping.
- ▶ **Establishing an AI governance task force:** Due to low technical literacy, a dedicated AI governance task force must be created to draft ethical principles, practical guidelines, and provide training on AI ethics and data literacy for media practitioners.
- ▶ **Investing in language-inclusive AI and research:** Sustain funding for initiatives like SEA-Lion and Nusa Dialogue to expand AI capabilities in local languages. Conduct data-supported research on AI's economic impact to generate evidence essential for effective government advocacy.
- ▶ **Formalizing a Global South Alliance:** Continue to align and coordinate strategies with CTRL+J partners across Latin America and Africa. Formalizing the Global South Alliance is crucial for sharing legal strategies, pooling knowledge, and coordinating cross-border advocacy. This network should also consider establishing a Global South news lab for industry-owned technological experimentation.



Group photo of all participants and panelists on the final day of CTRL+J APAC, July 24, 2025, marking the end of three intensive days of discussions and inspiring exchanges of ideas.



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