

## Real estate's old playbook is obsolete. AI is the new architect

IT is an algorithmic turn in Indian real estate, unmistakably so. Artificial Intelligence is no longer an emerging technology; it is an embedded force reshaping industries with quiet inevitability. From manufacturing floors to financial markets, AI is recalibrating how decisions are made and value is created. India's AI market, estimated at roughly \$10 billion, may still be nascent, yet its transformative potential is undeniable. Few sectors are as primed for reinvention as real estate — an industry long governed by instinct, opacity and fragmented processes.

The change begins at conception. Design and planning, traditionally iterative and time-intensive, are being reimaged through hyper-realistic AI simulations and generative 3D models. Architects and developers can now test structural resilience, environmental impact and aesthetic coherence in virtual environments before committing capital. Predictive cost engines promise sharper budget accuracy, reducing overruns that routinely erode profitability and delay delivery. In a business where time is money, foresight is power.

Planning inefficiencies — the chronic fault line of infrastructure development — are also set to diminish. AI-enabled scheduling systems dynamically allocate labour, materials and equipment using real-time data. By synthesising inputs from contractors, suppliers and regulatory frameworks, these systems anticipate disruptions rather than merely reacting to them. The outcome is not just speed, but structural discipline.

On construction sites, the shift is even more visible. AI-guided drones can map progress with granular precision, while vision-based safety systems monitor compliance and detect hazards instantaneously. Predictive analytics identify workflow inefficiencies, recommend corrective measures and optimise resource deployment.

Instead of episodic supervision, construction sites evolve into interconnected digital ecosystems — responsive, monitored and continuously improving.

True disruption, however, may unfold in the marketplace itself. Property discovery is moving beyond static listings toward personalised digital journeys. AI platforms curate options aligned with a buyer's financial capacity, lifestyle preferences and long-term investment goals. Automated valuation tools offer data-driven pricing benchmarks, narrowing the trust deficit that has historically clouded transactions. Immersive virtual tours and predictive investment modelling allow stakeholders to assess risk and reward with unprecedented clarity.

Post-sale, the lifecycle continues to evolve. Smart buildings powered by sensor networks, adaptive lighting and intelligent access systems are redefining occupancy. AI-driven management tools monitor energy consumption, anticipate maintenance needs and enhance security in real time. Buildings, in effect, become responsive environments rather than inert assets.

For India, where rapid urbanisation intersects with rising consumer expectations, this technological convergence offers more than operational gains. It promises transparency in pricing, efficiency in execution and sustainability in long-term management. PropTech, underpinned by AI, has the potential to formalise and modernise a sector that contributes significantly to GDP yet has lagged in technological adoption.

The transformation will not be instantaneous, nor uniformly distributed. Regulatory adaptation, data governance and skill development will shape the pace of change. But the direction is clear. Indian real estate is entering an algorithmic era — one where bricks and bytes converge to redefine how cities are imagined, built and lived in.



## Hungary breaks ranks as Europe seeks to tighten the screws on Russia

Orbán's challenge to Brussels underscores the limits of consensus politics in a time of war

SAM McNEIL & SYLVIE CORBET

THE European Union's latest sanctions package targeting Russia's shadow fleet and energy revenues is being blocked by Hungary, the bloc's top diplomat said on Monday. EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said the bloc's 27 foreign ministers gathering in Brussels would likely not agree on the 20th package of sanctions, which it hoped to pass ahead of the fourth anniversary on Tuesday of Russia's all-out invasion of Ukraine. "I think there is not going to be progress regarding this today," Kallas said before a regular meeting of the EU's foreign ministers in Brussels, where discussion of the 20th sanctions package was planned.

The meeting came after Hungary threatened over the weekend to block the EU sanctions plans and to obstruct a 90 billion euro loan for Ukraine until Russian oil deliveries to Hungary resume. Russian oil shipments to Hungary and Slovakia have been interrupted since Jan. 27 after what Ukrainian officials say were Russian drone attacks that damaged the Druzhba pipeline, which carries Russian crude across Ukrainian territory and into Central Europe. That has led to rising tensions between Budapest and Kyiv. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán doubled down Monday on his unsubstantiated allegation that Ukraine was deliberately holding back shipments of Russian oil, and accused Kyiv of seeking to topple his government. In a post on social media, Orbán referred to the oil supply disruptions as a "Ukrainian oil blockade" led by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. "We have given President Zelenskyy firm and proportionate responses," Orbán



wrote. "He, too, must understand: by attacking Hungary, he can only lose." For the sanctions to pass, the 27-nation bloc needs to reach a unanimous decision. Kallas said that efforts would also continue on Monday to advance the EU's 90 billion euro loan to Ukraine.

Hungary's looming election hangs over EU talks

Facing a crucial election in less than two months, Orbán has launched an aggressive anti-Ukraine campaign and accused the opposition Tisza party, which leads in most polls, of conspiring with the EU and Ukraine to install what he called Monday a "pro-Ukraine government aligned with Brussels and Kyiv." Poland's Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski said he believed Hungary's surprise announcement Sunday could really be about Hungarian Prime Minister

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Viktor Orbán's fierce fight to hold onto power. "I would have expected a much greater feeling of solidarity from Hungary for Ukraine," he said in Brussels. "The ruling party managed to create a climate of hostility towards the victim of aggression. And then it is now trying to exploit that in the general

election. It's quite shocking." Nearly every country in Europe has significantly reduced or entirely ceased Russian energy imports since Moscow launched its full-scale war in Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022. Yet Hungary and Slovakia, both EU and NATO members, have maintained and even increased

supplies of Russian oil and gas, and received a temporary exemption from an EU policy prohibiting imports of Russian oil.

Other Europeans urge solidarity with Ukraine

"Tomorrow we are entering the fifth year of the war," said Latvian foreign minister Baiba Braze ahead of the meeting. "We are fully committed both to the 20th sanctions package, including maritime and maritime services ban, but also political commitment, economic commitment, military commitment to support European values." German Foreign Minister Johann Wadepuhl said he was "astounded by the Hungarian position." "I don't think it is right if Hungary betrays its own fight for freedom and European sovereignty," Wadepuhl told reporters in Brussels, alluding to Hungary's role in the fall of communism in Europe in 1989. "So we will once again come to the Hungarians with our arguments, in Budapest but of course also here in Brussels, for them to reconsider their position."

"The German position is very clear: we must now show strength, we must support Ukraine sustainably, and we must do exactly what we did last year too: continue to raise the pressure on Russia," Wadepuhl said, adding that he is sure the EU will agree on a 20th sanctions package "at the end of the day." Also on the line is a major 90-billion-euro (USD 106-billion) EU loan to Ukraine meant to help Kyiv meet its military and economic needs for the next two years.

"We must release that. We must find an agreement between the member states because Ukraine needs this money heavily," said Margus Tsahkna, the foreign minister of Estonia.

## New Mexico opens probe into forced sterilisation of Native American women

Decades after thousands were left unable to have children, the state begins examining the lasting damage

SAVANNAH PETERS

IN the 1970s, the US agency that provides health care to Native Americans sterilised thousands of women without their full and informed consent, depriving them of the opportunity to start or grow families. Decades later, the state of New Mexico is set to investigate that troubling history and its lasting harm. New Mexico legislators approved a measure this week to have the state Indian Affairs Department and the Commission on the Status of Women examine the history, scope and continuing impact of forced and coerced sterilisations of women of colour by the Indian Health Service and other providers.

The findings are expected to be reported to the governor by the end of 2027. "It's important for New Mexico to understand the atrocities that took place within the borders of our state," said state Sen Linda Lopez, one of the legislation's sponsors. It's not the first state to confront its past. In 2023, Vermont launched a truth and reconciliation commission to study forced sterilisation of marginalised groups including Native Americans. In 2024, California began paying reparations to people who had been sterilised without their consent in state-run prisons and hospitals.

The New Mexico Legislature also laid the groundwork to create a separate healing commission and for a formal acknowledgment of a little known piece of history that haunts Native families Sarah Deer, a professor at the University of Kansas School of Law, said it's long overdue. "The women in these communities carry these stories," she said. Outside of a 1976 US Government Accountability Office report, the federal government

has never acknowledged what Deer calls a campaign of "systemic" sterilisations in Native American communities. "The Indian Health Service (IHS) and its parent agency, the US Department of Health and Human Services, did not respond to multiple emails requesting comment on New Mexico's investigation."

### A troubling history

In 1972, Jean Whitehorse was admitted to an Indian Health Service hospital in Gallup, New Mexico, with a ruptured appendix. Just 22 and a new mother, Whitehorse said she remembers experiencing "extreme pain" as providers presented her with a flurry of consent forms before rushing her into emergency surgery. "The nurse held the pen in my hand. I just signed on the line," said Whitehorse, a Navajo Nation citizen. A few years later when she was struggling to conceive a second child, Whitehorse said she returned to the hospital and learned she had received a tubal ligation. The news devastated Whitehorse, contributed to the breakdown of her relationship and sent her spiraling into alcoholism, she said. Advocates already were sounding the alarm about women like Whitehorse who were entering IHS clinics and hospitals to give birth or for other procedures and later finding themselves unable to conceive.

The activist group Women of All Red Nations, or WARN — an offshoot of the American Indian Movement — was formed in part to expose the practice. In 1974, Choctaw and Cherokee physician Connie Redbird Uri reviewed IHS records and alleged that the federal agency had sterilised as many as 25 per cent of its female patients of childbearing age. Some of the women



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Uri interviewed were unaware they had been sterilised. Others said they were bullied into consenting or misled to believe the procedure was reversible. Uri's allegations helped prompt the GAO audit, which found that the Indian Health Service sterilised 3,406 women in four of the agency's 12 service areas between 1973 and 1976, including in Albuquerque. The agency found that some patients were under the age of 21 and most had signed forms that didn't comply with federal regulations meant to ensure informed consent. GAO researchers determined that interviewing women who had undergone sterilisations "would not be productive," citing a single study of cardiac surgical patients in New York who struggled to recall past conversations with doctors. Because of the lack of patient interviews and the narrow purview of the GAO's audit, advocates say the full scope and impact remains unaccounted for.

### A venue to tell their stories

Whitehorse didn't share her experience for nearly 40 years, she said. First, she told her daughter. Then, other family. "Each time I tell my story, it relieves the shame, the guilt," Whitehorse said. "Now I think, why should I be ashamed? It's the government that should be ashamed of what they did to us." Whitehorse now advocates publicly for victims of forced sterilisation. In 2025, she testified about the practice to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and called for the United States to formally apologise. Whitehorse hopes New Mexico's investigation will offer more victims a venue to tell their stories. But advocates like Rachael Lorenzo, executive director of the Albuquerque-based sexual and reproductive health organisation Indigenous Women Rising, say the commission must be careful to avoid re-traumatising survivors across generations.

"It's such a taboo topic. There's a lot of support that needs to happen when we tell these traumatic stories," said Lorenzo. In a New Mexico legislative hearing earlier this month, retired Indian Health Service physician Dr Donald Clark testified that he has seen patients in their 20s and 30s "seeking contraception but not trusting that they will not be irreversibly sterilised" because of stories quietly passed down by their grandmothers, mothers and aunts. "It's still an issue that is affecting women's choice of birth control today," Clark said.

### A pattern of disenfranchisement

A 1927 US Supreme Court decision in Buck v Bell upheld states' rights to sterilise people it considered "unfit" to reproduce, paving the way for the forced sterilisation of immigrants, people of colour, disabled people and other disenfranchised groups throughout the 20th century.

According to Lorenzo and Deer, the sterilisation of Native American women fits into a pattern of federal policies meant to disrupt Native people's reproductive autonomy, from the systemic removal of Indigenous children into government boarding schools and non-Native foster homes to the 1976 Hyde Amendment, which prevents tribal clinics and hospitals that receive federal funding from performing abortions in almost all cases. In Canada, doctors have been sanctioned as recently as 2023 for sterilising Indigenous women without their consent. Deer said New Mexico's investigation could pave the way for accountability. But without cooperation from the federal government, Deer said the commission's fact-finding abilities would be limited. (AP)

## India's EV hub dream hits a policy speed bump

Low disbursements and structural flaws in the PLI scheme raise questions over India's EV manufacturing ambitions



Vivek Shukla

QUESTIONS are increasingly being raised over how India's ambition of becoming a global electric vehicle (EV) hub will be realised. Industry voices argue that innovators must be actively supported if India is to emerge as a true manufacturing centre for EVs. Without this, the vision risks remaining largely aspirational.

Amid the rapid expansion of India's electric vehicle market, deep-tech startups have flagged serious concerns over the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for the automobile sector. Several EV companies say that a large portion of the PLI scheme announced by the Ministry of Heavy Industries has yet to translate into actual support on the ground.

Despite allocations run-

ning into thousands of crores of rupees, disbursement under the scheme has been extremely limited. This has deprived innovation-driven startups of the backing they were expecting, even as competition in the global EV space intensifies.

Industry stakeholders maintain that if the allocated funds are deployed effectively and in a more balanced manner, India's EV ecosystem could rapidly strengthen its position in global markets.

Early 2026 estimates indicate that utilisation of PLI funds for EV startups remains low. Only around 10 per cent of the allocated amount has reportedly been disbursed so far. In the Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) battery segment, incentives distributed account for just 2.8 per cent of the targeted allocation. Despite a higher budgetary outlay, overall utilisation of PLI funds is expected to reach only about 12 per cent by the end of the 2025–26 financial year.

EV startups argue that simply increasing allocations will not accelerate

industry growth. Unless a meaningful share of the funds reaches startups, Indian firms will struggle to remain competitive. At present, they say, only a handful of established players appear to be benefiting from the scheme.

Saurav Kumar, Founder and CEO of Euler Motors, points out that commercial EVs offer the highest returns but receive inadequate incentives under the current PLI framework. To boost job creation in this segment, he says, the scheme needs restructuring. Instead of turnover-based criteria, incentives should be linked to actual EV sales.

Echoing similar concerns, Arvind Mani, Co-founder and CEO of River Mobility, says the primary goal of India's EV push should be building sustainable domestic capacity. Innovators, he argues, must be supported if India is to become a global EV hub and a genuine manufacturing centre.

As questions mount over slow disbursements and structural gaps in the PLI scheme, policymakers will be under pressure to respond.

