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- ❖ **Role of Artificial Intelligence in Cybersecurity**
- ❖ **Critical Appreciation of Pragmatic Realism of Kautilya**
- ❖ **History of Women's Education in India**
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FIFA World Cup 2026—Tears and Cheers

World Soccer tournament better known as ‘2026 FIFA World Cup’ was concluded on July 19, 2026 with Spain lifting the trophy for the second time in the history of World Cup Football. It defeated Argentina 1-0 in extra time in the final at MetLife Stadium in New York (USA). Disheartened Argentina’s Fans started an online petition demanding the final be replayed. Argentinean fans believed that several decisions of the referee went against the team in the final, hence a replay appointing a different referee, to guarantee transparency and sporting fairness. However, there is no precedent for a World Cup final ever being replayed. This was the most connected, intelligent, and technologically advanced FIFA World Cup; an ecosystem with AI-powered matches analysis and referee view broadcast innovation.

The 23rd World Cup Football was held across three countries i.e., United States, Mexico and Canada. It was jointly hosted by 16 cities (11 in USA, 3 in Mexico and 2 in Canada) which became the first World Cup to be hosted by three countries with 48 teams, which was an expansion from the previous 32-team format. The tournament began on June 11 and concluded on July 19, 2026. Eyes were glued to the tournament’s two biggest stars in the Final of the World Cup: Lionel Messi and Lamine Yamal. While Messi was one of the senior most players of the tournament, Yamal was one of the youngest players at 18-years age. Cape Verde, Curacao, Jordan and Uzbekistan made their World Cup debuts in the tournament. Messi of Argentina lost the Golden Boot award to Kylian Mbappe of France as former scored seven goals against the 10 goals of Mbappe, in spite of the fact that Messi single-handedly carried Argentina to the finals. Erling Haaland of Norway also scored seven goals and carried his country to the knockout stage for the first time and made news for defeating Brazil in famous Round of 32.

Many records were broken and many were made by world class players during the course of the entire tournament. Dick Advocaat became the oldest coach at 78 years and 271 days when he led Curacao against Cote d’Ivoire. Jude Bellingham, Harry Kane, Ousmane Dembele and Kylian Mbappe of France became first team-mate of the FIFA World Cup which scored six goals in one edition of the match in the fight for third and fourth place. Didier Deschamps 57-year-old coach of France enjoyed 14-year tenure as Coach with most appearances (26 in total) and he led France to finish at Fourth-place of the 2026 World Cup. Johan Manzambi of Switzerland became youngest substitute to bag a brace against Bosnia and Herzegovina in just two minutes and 46 seconds of his appearance on the field. Kylian Mbappe solidified his status as a football legend by finishing the 2026 World Cup’s top scorer with 10 goals and 4 assists in 8 matches. He did not only bag the golden boot award but also became the first player to win back-to-back top scorer title. Lionel Messi became the player with most victories numbering 23 wherein he inspired Argentina to seven successive wins. Gilberto Mora, the Mexican player became the youngest player of the FIFA World Cup 2026 with just 17 years and 240 days old during the opening match with South Africa on June 11, 2026.

Wasting time intentionally by players on the field, especially the winning team has been one of the most oft-repeated nuisances. 2026 Format of FIFA thus witnessed several rule changes to reduce time-wasting which included players being substituted to have ten seconds to exit the field, otherwise the substitute had to wait for one minute before entering the match. The match also revised the rule to have five seconds restarts for throw-ins and goal kicks in. Players who received medical attention on the field had to leave the field and wait for one minute before returning to play. Many new rules were also adopted to address different other kinds of conflicts which arise during the course of the game.

The tournament which began in 1930 has been held every four years with the exception of 1942 and 1946 during and shortly after the World War II. Thus far the trophy has been won by eight national teams and Brazil is the only team to have played in every tournament and won the trophy five times. The governing body of football had to shell out almost \$1 billion to the 48 participating football federations in terms of prize money and operating expenses. Spain, the Champion of the 2026 World Cup received \$51 million as reported in media. \$10 million went to nations exiting in the group stage like Uruguay and Iran; whereas countries eliminated in the Round of 32 like Germany received \$12 million. Those countries exited the Round of 16 like the USA were awarded \$16 million in prize money; while ones reaching the quarter final stage netted \$20 million in prize money like, Morocco, Belgium, Norway, and Switzerland. France at fourth place received \$28 million, England at third place received \$30 million, and Argentina the runner-up received \$34 million. 104 matches played over 39 days brought both tears to numerous eyes and cheers to many faces.

—BK