

Sport



Japan's Emperor Akihito (L) and Empress Michiko wave to the crowd after making the opening declaration at Hiroshima Stadium yesterday. — AFP photo

Colourful ceremony marks 12th Asiad opening

Hiroshima's paean for peace

HIROSHIMA, Oct 2: The city reduced to rubble by an atomic bomb nearly 50 years ago launched one of Asia's largest-ever sporting events Sunday with a powerful plea for world peace, reports AP.

Japanese Emperor Akihito declared the 12th Asian Games open at 2:39 pm (0539 GMT) after a procession of participants into Hiroshima's new 50,000-seat stadium.

Nearly 5,000 athletes from 42 nations and territories will be competing over the next two weeks for a total of 337 gold medals in 34 sports. China, overwhelming victor at the last Asiad, is certain to reap the largest medal harvest.

The opening festivities began with an upbeat concert by young singers from four Asian nations and ended with a spectacle of light and dance depicting mankind moving from despair toward hope and peace.

Figures wearing dark mantles, suffering from repeated ordeals, were supplanted by young women in bright attire on a field splashed with glitter and light. A joyous, mass dance ended the 4 1/2-hour ceremony.

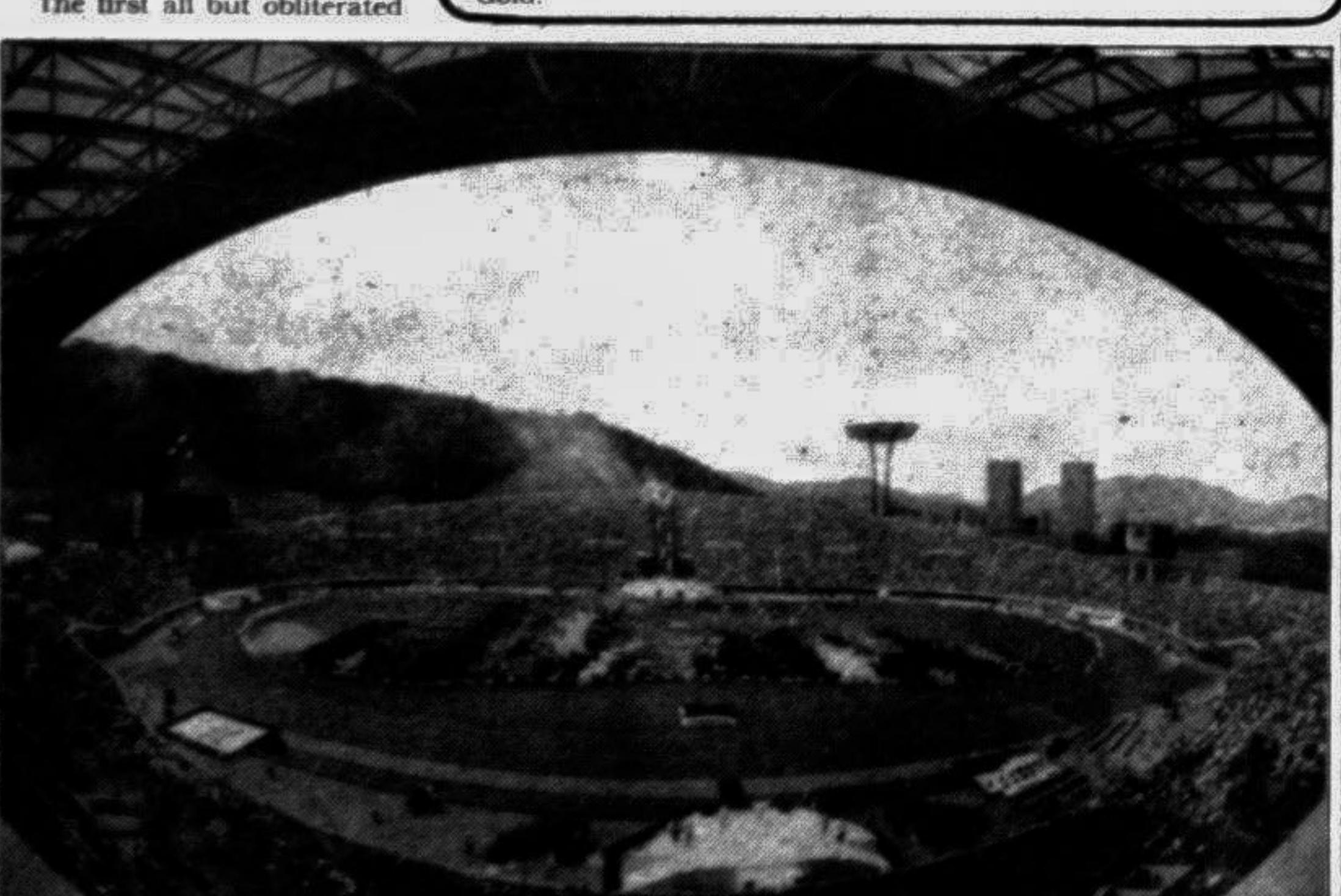
In one of the opening speeches, Hironoshin Furuhashi, president of the organizing committee, said he hoped the Games' theme of Asian harmony would help create "an attractive and dynamic Asia for the 21st century" and that Hiroshima's "message for the pursuit of peace will be heard throughout Asia and all the world."

Both the emblem and mascots of the Games are variations on the dove of peace, while the torch for lighting the Games' flame was started from both the flame of the 1990 Games in Beijing and from the "Flame of Peace" in a Hiroshima park dedicated to the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Helicopters fluttered overhead and security on the ground was tight. Radical leftists, who oppose Japan's monarchy, had threatened to disrupt the opening ceremony, and on Saturday dozens of radicals demonstrated against the emperor's visit to Europe, due to begin after Sunday's ceremonies.

The emperor's late father, Hirohito, was the symbolic leader of Japan during World War II and announced the nation's surrender days after the United States dropped two atomic bombs on Japanese cities in August 1945.

The first all but obliterated



A bird's eye view of the opening ceremony of the 12th Asian Games in Hiroshima yesterday. Some 7,800 students, musicians and dancers took part in the ceremonial. — AFP photo

Remembrance of war

HIROSHIMA, Oct 2: Watching the opening ceremony of the Asian Games from one of the best seats in the stadium on Sunday was a wheelchair-bound Iranian who once dreamed of being present as a basketballer, reports Reuter.

An exploding mine in 1980 in the war against Iraq blew away both the legs of Mehrdad Agha and cut short his promising sports career.

"My first thought when I woke up in hospital was that I could never play basketball again," the 33-year-old said as he gazed at athletes marching into the stadium from 42 nations.

"But I now play wheelchair basketball," he said, joking his team would be a challenge for the Dream Team of US players led by Michael Jordan which decimated the opposition at the 1992 Olympics at Barcelona.

"But remember that they are professionals," he said.

Agha, who joined the revolutionary guards in Islamic fervour, fished out of his pocket a photograph of his two young daughters.

He said the Iranian government paid him a generous monthly allowance for his war wounds as it did for his friend beside him at the Games, Morad Ali Shirany, who was an international wrestler before he lost a leg in the war.

Agha runs a private publishing company in Tehran and visits every Asian Games.

He said his anger against Iraq has now been diluted by the passing of time.

He even wished they were back after their expulsion from the last Games at Beijing in 1990 for invading Kuwait, another Games participant.

"I have nothing against the people, only the government," he said.

Agha said he was particularly keen to come to Hiroshima because of its experiences with war.

"All war is horrible," the bearded Agha said, referring to the atomic bomb that destroyed Hiroshima at the end of World War Two.

Robinson stuns McKenzie

CARDIFF, Wales, Oct 2: Steve Robinson stunned Duke McKenzie with a left hook to the ribs in the ninth round to score a knockout and hold to his World Boxing Organization featherweight title Saturday and stop his opponent winning a fourth title at different weights, reports AP.

This was followed by a colourful depiction of winds and bridges linking the people of Asia, and by 676 children cavorting with PoPo and CuCu, the Games' mascots.

Another spectacle portrayed storms, serenity and contrasting seasonal moods of the Seto Inland Sea, which borders Hiroshima, and climaxed with a march of samurai warriors to the throb of 105 drums.

The entry march of the teams featured the flowing robes of the Arab world, kilts of the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan and the kimonos of the Japanese women who carried the country name placards of all but the Iranian team.

Apparently in keeping with the wishes of the fundamentalist Moslem nation, a male marched in front of the Iranians with the placard.

Some of the Warmest applause went to Cambodia, China, Taiwan, host Japan and the one-man Palestinian team.

Eltingh's 2nd ATP title

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 2: Jacco Eltingh of the Netherlands picked up his second ATP title of the year when he defeated Andrei Olhovskiy of Russia 7-6 (7-1), 2-6, 6-4 in the final of the dollar 400,000 Malaysian Open on Sunday, reports Reuter.

Eltingh, whose first ATP success this year was when he won the OTB International Open Tennis at the end of August in Schenectady, New York, boosted his bank balance by dollar 54,000 on Sunday when Olhovskiy collected dollars 31,800.

The Dutchman, ranked 39th, in the world and seeded second, had problems with his service in the opening set but gradually found the pace and direction he needed to recover before dominating the tiebreak 7-1.

But Olhovskiy recovered from that setback to take the second set 6-2, setting up the decider.

The decisive break in the third set came in the seventh game when the 24-year-old Dutchman went 4-3 ahead. He then held his own service to take a 5-3 lead before eventually taking the third set 6-4.

Eltingh admitted afterwards: "I had some problems with my serve. It was a bad second set but I took my chances well in the final set. It's been a tough week and it's nice to win the title at the end of it."

World, Fu Mingxia's oyster

HIROSHIMA, Oct 2: With two world championships and an Olympic gold to her name, Fu Mingxia's place in the annals of diving already is assured, reports AP.

And she's only just turned 16.

Fu was 12 when she won her first world championship. She took gold a year later at the 1992 Olympics and last month retained her world title with a stunning final dive.

"Even though I'm not very old, I've been diving for more than 10 years," she said in an interview. "You could say I'm a veteran."

But at the 12th Asian Games opening Sunday, Fu will have a reminder of what it's like to be a beginner. Her coach, Xu Yiming, is making her dive in the 3-metre springboard competition, not the 10-metre platform where she won her titles.

"Even though she's not used to it, she still has to dive," Xu said. "I want to watch her, see how she performs."

Xu said he hopes to enter Fu in both the 3-metre and 10-metre events at the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, upon which Xu has focused his energies since his team dominated in Barcelona two years ago.

"The whole world pays a lot of attention to the Olympics, even the American government," he said. "My biggest responsibility is the Olympics."

Xu said he is using the Oct 2-16 Asian Games as training for Atlanta, entering a team that mixes stars like Tan Shuping, the 3-metre springboard women's world champion, with lesser known divers who need more experience in international competition.

The youngest is Wang Rui, an eager-faced 13-year-old

whom Xu discovered when she was 8. Wang won on the 10-metre platform at China's national games last year and is replacing Fu in that event in Hiroshima.

"Xu says it's necessary for breeding champions. He denied he is depriving the kids of their childhood and says he gets letters daily from children begging to join his team."

Their lives are much more interesting than a normal kid's," he said. "When they think back, they will feel proud to have represented their country."

They also are likely to be richer. China rewards its champions well and companies often offer them lucrative advertising contracts.

During training sessions, Xu bangs cymbals, plays tape recordings of crowd noises and hurls buckets of water at his divers to teach them to ignore distractions, he said. He also teaches them not to look at the scoreboard until after their final dive.

"I tell them that when they compete, they must compete against themselves," he said.

The fruits of Xu's training are evident in Fu, who looks much more mature than her 16 years.

But Fu did not ooze confidence about her chances in the 3-metre board competition. "I'm a newcomer, this is just training," she said.

For dear doves' sake

HIROSHIMA, Oct 2: Asian Games organisers saved the doves released at Sunday's opening ceremony from a grilling, reports AFP.

• Spectators thought the flame had gone out when women's basketball player Aki Ichijo and steeplechased Yasunori Uchitomi lowered their torches into the steel bowl.

But Shigeaki Saegusa, the ceremony's editorial director, said the eight second delay before the flames shot into the air was deliberate.

"There was no technical hitch. We didn't want to put the birds at risk," he said. "We had learnt the lesson from Seoul."

Many of the doves at the 1988 Seoul Olympics signed their feathers when they wheeled over the flame.

Chief of Nepal's delegation dies

HIROSHIMA, Oct 2: The chief of Nepal's delegation to the Asian Games died shortly after the Games opening ceremony Sunday, organisers said, reports AP.

Naresh Kumar Adhikari, 46, was taken from the Athletes Village to a nearby hospital after suffering breathing difficulties, said Shisuo Nomura, head of the Games' medical department.

A statement issued by the Games' organisers said Adhikari was pronounced dead at 3:40 pm (0640 GMT). It said he was on his way to the opening ceremonies when he experienced the breathing difficulties.

He was taken back to the village, where he collapsed, and then to the Hiroshima Municipal Asa Hospital, where he died.

The cause of death was not immediately known.

Adhikari headed Nepal's 70-member delegation to the Games, Asia's version of the Olympics.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

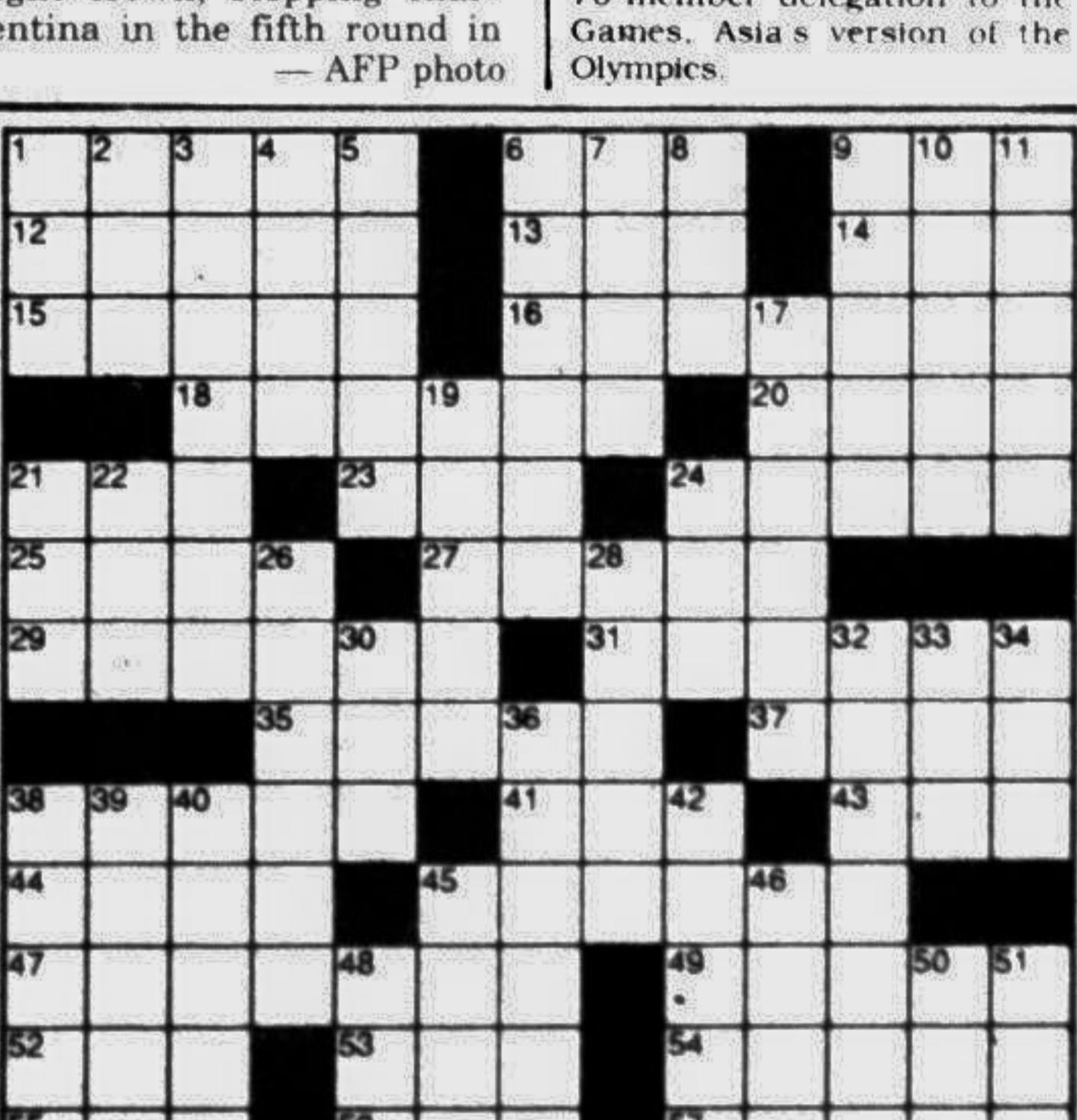
1 Mid-March honoree 37 Ox link
6 Gift-wrap feature 38 Menotti lad
9 You can't stand to have one 41 Succor
12 Chihuahua chum 43 Understand
13 Thurman of "Henry & June" 44 One's performance
14 Springsteen's birthplace 45 Third-party arrangement
15 Calvin's Hobbes, e.g. 47 Nonsense
16 Potential steel 49 Collegiate flora
18 Club fellow 52 Geologic period
20 Eat in style 53 The old West?
21 Yon maiden 54 African terrain
22 Madonna's ex 55 Spot
23 Moray, for one
24 Stashes
25 Madonna's ex
27 Ardent lover
29 Caesar's nonpraiser
31 Street waff
35 Famed operatic soprano

56 Kramden's concern

57 Over 9 Startling
1 Perched 10 Unanimously
2 Pa. nuclear-accident site 11 Glazier's supply
17 Utter foolishness 17 Utter foolishness
19 Aviator Markham
21 Hot tub 22 Chick's mom
24 The ship 26 Absentee
28 Kern field 30 Zilch
32 Very excited 33 Mamie's man
34 Profit 36 Tray contents
36 Cilia 38 Roger or Dudley
38 39 40 41 42 43
44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51
52 53 54 55 56 57

Solution time: 26 mins.

BARS	GIS	SMOG
ALOT	ROC	HOHO
NEAR	ENO	INTO
MEAN	WANTON	
ADO	PER	
PUCK	BOARDERS	
ISA	LIC	ACE
PANATELA	FLAX	
BIO	PAR	
CHERRY	UNITAS	
HARM	ALL	DOTE
OKRA	PEC	AGOG
WEAN	SAO	YAMS



CRYPTOQUIP

G U W W J D G Q N Q C A Z

R T N D J M W J J D P G D Q Y R N Z

A D M U G T W P R O O W J R

A R Y Q C C W L L Q N J F

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: LOCAL TELEPHONE OPERATOR HAS CONNECTIONS.

Today's Cryptoquip clue: J equals D

The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.