

Legendary footballer P.K. Banerjee passes away

An attacking forward, he enriched the sport as a coach too

Y.B. SARANGI
KOLKATA

Two-time Olympian Pradip Kumar 'PK' Banerjee, one of the greatest footballers of the country, passed away here on Friday afternoon following prolonged illness. He was 83 and is survived by his two daughters and brother Prasun, a former India football captain and a current Member of Parliament.

PK was 'suffering from sepsis and multi-organ failure due to pneumonia with a background of Parkinson's disease, dementia and heart problems' and had been on life support at a city hospital since March 7.

Born on June 23, 1936 in Jalpaiguri, PK shifted to Jamshedpur at an early age and shone as a teenager while representing Bihar in the Santosh Trophy. An attacking player, he turned out for Aryan Club and Eastern Railway, netting more than 190 goals, before hanging up his boots in 1967.

PK, who represented India in 36 official matches and sported the captain's armband in six of them, scored 19 goals for the country.

Debating with a bang

PK made his international

debut on December 18, 1955, against Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in the Quadrangular Cup in Dhaka. He scored five goals, the maximum by an Indian in his debut tournament, in the country's title triumph.

He was part of three consecutive Asian Games – 1958 (Tokyo), 1962 (Jakarta, where India won gold) and 1966 (Bangkok) – and holds the record of scoring maximum number of goals (six) for India.

He represented the country in the 1956 Melbourne Olympics and played a pivotal role in the 4-2 victory against Australia in the quarterfinals. India eventually finished fourth. PK captained the National side in the 1960 Rome Olympics and scored the equaliser against France in a 1-1 draw.

At the domestic level, he won the Santosh Trophy thrice each for Bengal (1955, 1958 and 1959) and Railways (1961, 1964 and 1966).

Awards galore

PK was the first footballer to receive the Arjuna Award in 1961 and was awarded the Padma Shri in 1990. He was bestowed with the FIFA Fair-play Award in 1990 and the

FIFA Centennial Order of Merit in 2004.

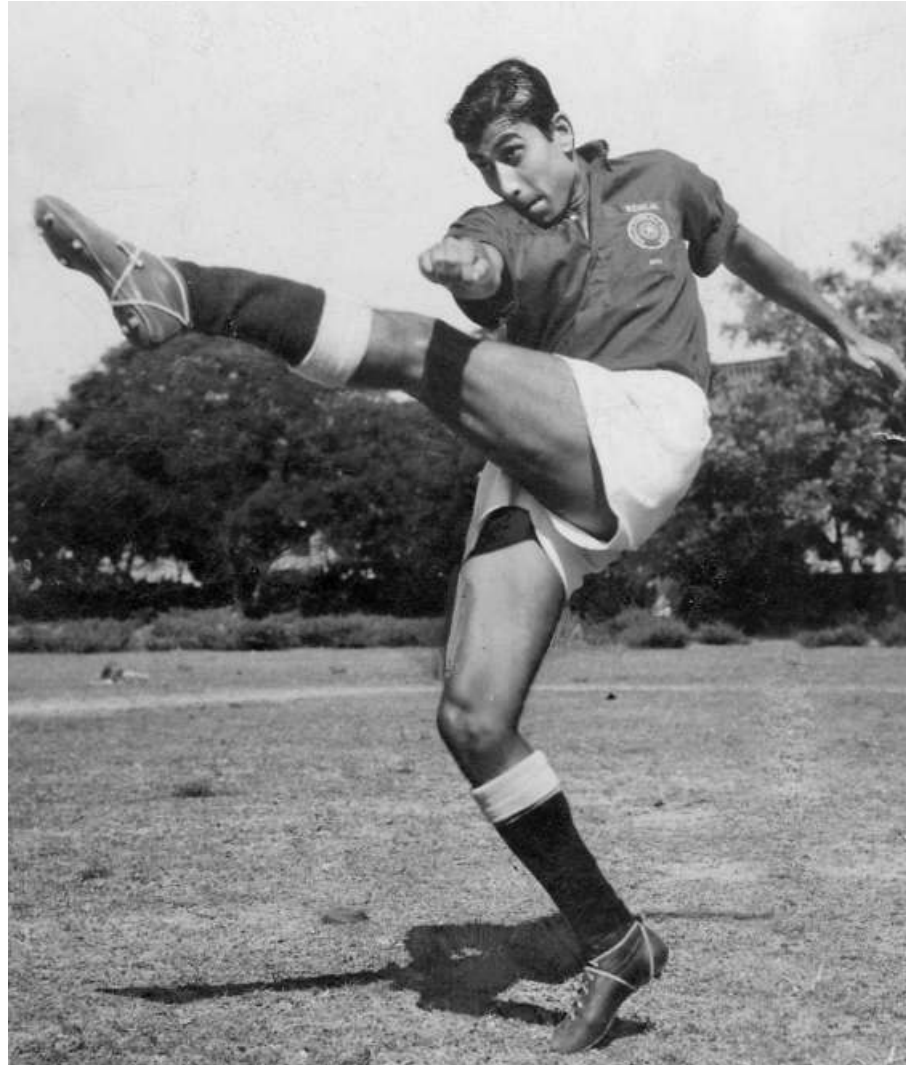
PK coached India in four editions of the Asian Games (including the 1970 Bangkok Asiad where the team won bronze), five Merdeka Cups, two editions of the Nehru Cup and other international tournaments.

As a coach at the club level, he won 30 trophies for East Bengal and 23 for Mohun Bagan. He was Bagan's coach when it held Cosmos (USA), that had the legendary Pele in the ranks, to a 2-2 draw.

PK also served as a Technical Director for the Tata Football Academy from 1991-97 and was a noted commentator.

As a mark of respect, the AIFF kept its flag half-mast at its headquarters in Delhi. Its president Praful Patel said, "he will stay synonymous with the golden generation of Indian football. Pradip-da, you will remain alive in our hearts."

Union Sports Minister Kiran Rijiju tweeted "...a legendary figure in the world of Football in India. It's a massive loss for the nation's footballing fraternity. I pay my heartfelt tributes to the departed soul."



Man with the golden boot: P.K. Banerjee was an inspirational player during Indian football's golden era in the 1950s and 1960s. • THE HINDU ARCHIVES

Colossus of Indian football

AMITABHA DAS SHARMA
KOLKATA

The demise of P.K. Banerjee signals the passing of the 'golden era' of Indian football.

PK, who strode the Indian football world like a colossus with his multifaceted talent, enriched the sport as a player, coach, administrator and commentator.

What made PK a legend was his larger-than-life status both as a footballer and then as a coach. For many of his peers and players of later generation, PK belonged to that realm of excellence which very few footballers in the country have reached.

At a time when football was mostly played in the five-forward system, PK excelled both as a right-winger and a centre-forward thanks to his speed, skill and power.

Teenage prodigy

Showing his talent at an early age, PK made his Santosh Trophy debut for Bihar at 15. Scouts from Kolkata (then Calcutta) clubs took note of his precocious talent and he started his club career with Aryan FC in 1954.

In order to support a large family, PK opted to take up a job in Eastern Railway which was a purely amateurish set-up. Soon after he joined, the Railways team made its way up the rungs of the famed Calcutta Football League and won the title in 1958, the first time a team outside the 'Big Three' – Mohun Bagan,



Capable guide: P.K. Banerjee was a successful coach thanks to his fantastic game-reading ability and excellent man-management skills. • FILE PHOTO: G.P. SAMPATH KUMAR

East Bengal and Mohammedan Sporting – had done so.

PK, who earned his National cap in the Quadrangular tournament in Dhaka in 1955, was part of the team that took part in the 1956 Melbourne Olympics where India beat host Australia 4-2 in the quarterfinals – with PK assisting hat-trick hero Neville DeSouza. In the next Olympics at Rome, PK, skipping the side, scored an equaliser to hold France 1-1.

In 1962, India won the Asian Games gold at Jakarta, beating a formidable South Korean side 2-1 in the final with PK scoring once. PK also played in the 1958 and 1966 Asian Games.

His international career ran for a considerable period as he represented India on three occasions in the Merdeka Cup in Kuala Lumpur – where India won silver in 1959 and 1964 and the bronze in 1965. In 1967, PK

announced his retirement from the sport.

Transition to coaching

He took charge of the National team and under his stewardship, India won bronze in the Bangkok Asian Games in 1970 – the last time it won a medal in football at the Games.

He was also the coach when India participated in Tehran (1974), New Delhi (1982) and Seoul (1986) Asian Games.

He started his club coaching career in 1972 and became extremely popular thanks to his fantastic game-reading ability and excellent man-management skills.

He had the unparalleled ability to motivate players with his careful selection of words laced with metaphors and anecdotes.

The passing of PK has created a void that will be hard to fill.

A perfect human being: Balaram

Tributes pour in for P.K. Banerjee from all over

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM
HYDERABAD

Prominent personalities from all over the country paid glowing tributes to P.K. Banerjee on his demise in Kolkata on Friday.

"His commitment and passion to the sport was something unique. More importantly, he was a perfect human being – the way he made youngsters and seniors in the team feel comfortable is something many modern generation stars can learn," said T. Balaram, a member of the illustrious 'troika' along with P.K. Banerjee and Chuni Goswami in the 1950s and 60s, to *The Hindu*.

"I had the privilege of being his teammate for two Olympics (1956 and 1960) and three Asian Games (including the gold-medal winning team in 1962). It is rare to see a more complete team-man than PK, who had amazing speed and ball control," said Balaram.

Genial

Nonagenarian Samar Banerjee, who also played alongside PK, said, "I was the captain of the Indian team in 1956 Melbourne Olympics and PK was the right winger. After that the Indian team toured Malaysia, Hong Kong, Singapore, Burma, Thailand, Indonesia and we got very good results... He was a



Lavish in praise: Sourav Ganguly and Sachin Tendulkar highlighted the positive vibes that one got from P.K. Banerjee. • PTI

very speedy and positive player who had the ability to score. He was full of life and jovial."

"He was our captain at the Rome Olympics. A wonderful dribbler with great speed. He was powerful and strong on both feet," noted Simon Sunderraj, another of PK's contemporaries.

"Heartfelt condolences on the passing of the great Indian footballer PK Banerjee! Have fond memories of meeting him on a few occasions and the positivity he spread. May his soul Rest In Peace!" tweeted Sachin Tendulkar.

Sourav Ganguly, in his tweet, noted: "Lost a very dear person today... someone who I loved and respected enormously... someone who had so much influence

in my career when I was a 18-year-old boy... his positivity was infectious... may his soul rest in peace...."

Big loss

"He was a great human being. A very happy soul and a father figure to me," said former India captain Bhaichung Bhutia. "It is a big loss to Indian football. He is one of the greatest footballers and coaches India has ever seen."

Indian football's biggest player currently, Sunil Chhetri, said, "He was a pioneer in every sense of the word, and his achievements will forever have a place in Indian footballing history. Rest in peace," Chhetri said.

(With inputs from Y.B. Sarangi and agencies)

CA, NZC not revoking NOCs as of now

Concerns over participation of foreign players due to travel restrictions

IPL

AYAN ACHARYA
CHENNAI

Even as COVID-19 continues to cripple major sporting events, the cricket boards of Australia, England, South Africa and New Zealand are still open to the idea of sending their players to India for IPL-13, should it happen.

The final approval is subject to the respective governments giving the go ahead and providing adequate preventive measures to combat the pandemic.

The Indian sports ministry on Thursday issued a fresh directive to federations in the country to suspend all events, competitions and trials until April 15, and with the introduction of restriction on air travel from regions in Europe or Asia, there are concerns over the participation of foreign players in this year's IPL.

Working with players

A Cricket Australia (CA) spokesperson said the board was working with players and their managers on ensuring, "they are aware of all the facts before they consider playing overseas. This information is being shared as part of ongoing discussions.

"The NOCs will most likely be issued along with information to ensure all players are fully informed before making individual decisions. As you can see, it is a very fluid situation."

The IPL-bound Australian players are in a limbo after the country's Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Wednesday issued an indefinite level-4 travel ban but Pat Cummins (KKR) and Josh Hazlewood's (CSK) manager Judie Andersen of Maximum Group International said there was "nothing from CA (on revoking NOCs) at the moment but they are reviewing the situation. Regarding the IPL, other than a tentative date of April 15, there



I'm ready: KKR's new signing Tom Banton. • AP

have been no further updates."

Same sentiment

Meanwhile, the New Zealand Cricket Board (NZC) too has echoed the same sentiment.

According to NZC, there has been "no consideration given to revoking NOCs. Instead, NZC is focusing on ensuring our professional players, men and women, receive the most relevant information, advice and guidance as it comes to hand."

Elsewhere, sources close to KKR's new signing Tom Banton have indicated that the England international was intending to play if the IPL went ahead. "Tom will follow government advice and be guided by his core employer Somerset CC as well as ECB. He really hopes the IPL can go ahead as long as safety is in place with regard to the coronavirus," said the source, on condition of anonymity.

At home, after a washout of the series opener in Dharamshala, India's two remaining ODIs against South Africa were cancelled as a precautionary measure.

However, CSA has refrained from taking a stance – at this point – on its players featuring in the IPL. "Given the time still left, we have not yet contacted our colleagues at the BCCI about this," said CSA's Head of Media and Communications.

Ding gets off the mark

SPORTS BUREAU
YEKATERINBURG

Top seed Fabiano Caruana's of the USA lost to Ding Liren in the third round of the Candidates chess tournament. The win gave the second-seeded Chinese his first point.

The results (third round): Ding Liren (Chn) 1 bt Fabiano Caruana (US) 1.5; Kirill Alekseenko (Rus) 1 drew with Ian Nepomniachtchi (Rus) 2; Alexander Grischuk (Rus) 1.5 drew with Wang Hao (Chn) 2; Anish Giri (Ned) 1 drew with Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra) 2.

Shuttler at All-England tests positive

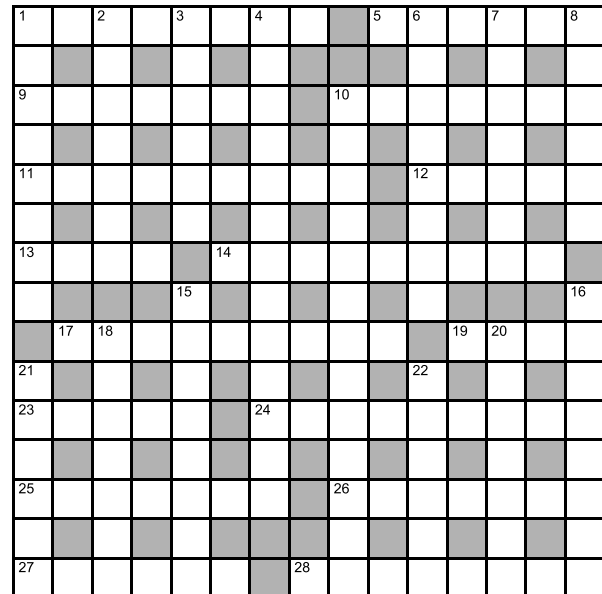
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

India shuttlers expressed shock after reports emerged that a sparring partner of the Taiwanese national team, who was in Birmingham during the All-England Championship, tested positive for the Coronavirus.

HK Vittinghus of Denmark on Friday shared a Taiwanese media report that a 10-year-old sports student was diagnosed positive for COVID-19.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12889

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles



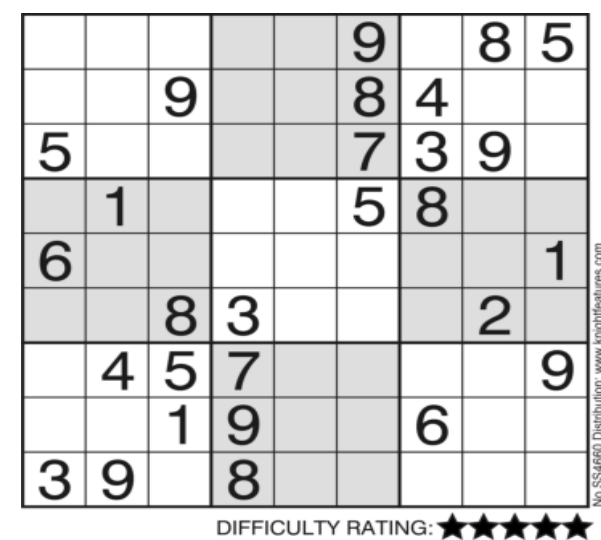
ACROSS

- Unawareness of old big cat having eaten four (8)
- Aches for a long time with Poles (6)
- Setter backs Hindi talk essentially sick and relating to clots (7)
- To rig a mixie involves some paperwork (7)

(set by Gridman)

- Most important soldier to hop on (9)
- Express a view: "Leaders of old public institutions not enterprising" (5)
- Every youth leader's one on your side (4)
- Portrayed as evil, stupid minors having not a shade of remorse indeed (9)
- Thus trade leader's present and in favour of end to Sale (9)
- First letter is first letter backing continent (4)
- "What's the purpose of green light?" "Pass" (5)
- Terms home circulated for electrical resistance calculators (3,6)
- Make too much of what's plain about account (7)
- Musical effect confuses lot more (7)
- Sorrowful to back that woman as dancer's teammate (6)
- Mentioned half of redact is in and attributed (8)
- Exaggerate the importance of soft song finished first (8)
- Generous one on the Left (7)
- Book quantity (6)
- Conductor fled in a hurry in the face of this weather condition (8,5)
- Somewhat poised, in-charge is coming at intervals (8)
- Become aware of a pack of lies (7)
- Party thus has anger over ultimate impudence (6)
- Exhausted executive group takes a little time to begin repairing removable engine (8,5)
- Claim from English spa with no introduction (8)
- Father's procured weapon with security code (8)
- Control run around partner on ship (7)
- Leave pets? (4,3)
- Manage the cost of a foreign car (6)
- The French officer's beginning to destroy key (6)

SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 12888

M	O	V	E	A	W	A	Y	B	L	O	G
B	U	I	I	U	O						
A	V	O	C	E	T	E	N	C	A	M	P
S	E	L	C	L	I	B	W				
T	A	R	N	I	S	H	E	D	C	O	A
A	S	D	H	H	E	G	M				
N	E	E	D	L	U	M	B	E	R	R	O
D	I	N	G	O	L	T	N	E	O	A	M
N	I	A	G	I	T	I	M	E	O	G	
F	L	I	C	K	D	O	G	K	E	N	N
R	N	I	R	U	M	A	Y				
O	F	F	E	N	C	E	M	I	G	R	E
N	U										
T	E	L	L								

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

8	9	2	3	6	4	7	1	5
3	6	7	8	1	5	9	4	2
4	5	1	2	7	9	3	6	8
6	8	4	1	2	7	5	3	9
2	1	5	6	9	3	8	7	4
7	3	9	5	4	8	6	2	1
1	2	3	9	5	6	4	8	7
9	4	8	7	3	1	2	5	6
5	7	6	4	8	2	1	9	3