Writers, activists and students join Kolkata march against attacks on Left book stalls

Subhendu Maiti

People participate in the 'Walk for Books' (Boiyer Jonno Hatun) rally to protest against the alleged attacks on Left book stalls set up during Durga Puja in Kolkata, West Bengal, on Saturday, Oct. 31, 2026.(Photo | Special Arrangement)

Updated on:

31 Oct 2026, 9:28 pm

3 min read

KOLKATA: Writers, artists, academics, intellectuals, students and other activists on Saturday joined a march titled ‘Walk for Books’ at Kolkata’s College Square, protesting against attacks allegedly backed by the ruling BJP on CPI(M) and other Left parties’ book stalls during the Durga Puja festival.

The stalls displayed Marxist and progressive literature and were allegedly targeted at various locations across the state.

Protesters carrying books by Rabindranath Tagore, Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and other literary icons, along with Marxist literature, took part in the march, which began at College Square on Saturday afternoon. No political slogans were heard during the march, and no flags or banners of political parties were seen.

Veteran academic Pabitra Sarkar, Jawhar Sircar, a retired IAS officer and former Trinamool Congress Rajya Sabha MP, prominent writers, and theatre and film personalities, among others, participated in the programme.

Md Salim, CPI(M) state secretary, and party leaders Sujan Chakraborty and Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya also joined the march. Participants assembled at College Square carrying books of their choice instead of conventional political flags to protest against recent attacks on Left book stalls set up near Durga Puja pandals in Kolkata and various districts across the state.

“It’s a unique protest organised by book lovers as well as civil society members. I think, the country has never seen such a unique and exceptional march to show protest against vandalism at book stalls. The initiative deserves appreciations,” said Sujan Chakraboty, a CPI(M) Central Committee member.

Participants carried a book as a symbol of resistance against attacks on freedom of thought and cultural expression.

The organisers alleged that several book stalls had been vandalised across the state, with incidents of arson also reported. They said the attacks went beyond political intolerance and amounted to an assault on the freedom to read, publish and sell books.

“Books are not merely commodities but instruments of knowledge, thought and protest,” the organisers said, appealing to book lovers and concerned citizens to join the march.

Protesters display their books during the 'Walk for Books' (Boiyer Jonno Hatun) rally to protest in Kolkata, West Bengal, on Saturday, Oct. 31, 2026.(Photo | Special Arrangement)

The CPI(M) alleged that nearly 300 stalls had been targeted during the festival. The party leadership said books shared an inseparable bond with Bengalis and that attacks on them were unacceptable.

Drawing a parallel with Nazi Germany, Chakraborty recalled the fate of Adolf Hitler, arguing that those who resorted to attacking books would ultimately face serious consequences.

The march sought to mobilise wider civil society against the alleged attacks and reaffirm the importance of protecting intellectual freedom and Bengal's cultural traditions.

A CPI(M) book stall in North 24 Parganas was damaged and set ablaze by unidentified people on the night of October 15, party sources claimed.

Located at the Charapool intersection in the Palashi Majhipara area of Bijpur, the stall escaped extensive damage after local residents stepped in to douse the fire, according to the party.

CPI(M) leaders, including senior member Kaltan Dasgupta, blamed people allegedly backed by the BJP for the incident. The claim could not be independently verified.

In a related development, the Kamardanga Durga Puja committee in the city's Entally area put up a flex banner carrying the slogan 'Bam Badh' (slay the Left) and prevented a CPI(M) stall from being set up near the puja pandal. The committee accused the Left of aiding anti-national forces and claimed that local people opposed the move.

Similar incidents of vandalism and obstruction were also reported at Palta Shantinagar in the Noapara Assembly constituency, as well as in Jorabagan, Shibpur and Kulpi in South 24 Parganas.

The controversy follows a political debate over the setting up of book stalls by Left parties during Durga Puja, a longstanding practice in Bengal's cultural and political landscape.

Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari had earlier urged Durga Puja committees to deny space to CPI(M) book stalls if the party used the term 'Sharodotsav' (autumn festival).