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Members object to Masani's remarks

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NEW DELHI, March 17.

MEMBERS of the Left Front today protested against certain expressions used by Mr Minoo Masani, a former MP and elder statesman, in a newspaper article while deploring the conduct of a section of Lok Sabha members in the house. They demanded that action should be taken against him for breach of privilege.

The issue was raised during zero hour by Mr Roopchand Pal (CPM) who said that Mr Masani, a leader of the former Swatantra Party, had described members of Left parties as "howling hooligans" and made some objectionable remarks. He alleged that this was part of a deliberate bid to denigrate them.

His views were supported by, among others, Mr Chandra Shekhar, former prime minister, Mr Inderjit (Cong), Mrs Gita

Mukherjee (CPI) and Mr Chitta Basu (Forward Bloc). Mr Chandra Shekhar said it was a serious matter and should be referred to the privileges committee immediately.

While expressing surprise that such objectionable expressions should appear in a newspaper article, the leader of the opposition, Mr L.K. Advani, suggested that the matter be ignored. He pointed out that in the past, Parliament had chosen to ignore even stronger epithets, taking into account the context in which they had been made.

An agitated Mr Somnath Chatterjee (CPM) said: "He (Mr Masani) is not just a toddler," he knew the exact meaning of the words he used.

Mr A.B. Vajpayee (BJP) recalled that Mr Masani had been a member of the house and used to adhere to parliamentary norms.