'Aadhaar' is Oxford's first Hindi word of the year

New Delhi: "Aadhaar" has become the first Oxford Dictionaries' Hindi 'Word of the Year' in keeping with the buzz and heated debate it has generated over its association with the Modi government's efforts linking the biometric ID with welfare and financial services.

In emerging as the Hindi 'word of the year', it beat other shortlisted words, including 'notebandi', 'swachh', 'vikaas', yoga and 'bahubali' — each reflecting the social, cultural, political, economic trends and events that shaped 2017. Regardless of individual views on 'Aadhaar', 2017 was certainly the year the word became a focus of conversations across the country. This is why it has been chosen as Oxford Dictionaries Hindi Word of the Year, stated a release.

The Hindi 'word of the year' was chosen by the Oxford Dictionaries team in India with the help of an advisory panel of language experts that includes, among others, Kritika Agrawal, lawyer, polyglot and Indian language expert; Mallika Ghosh, senior editorial manager at Oxford University Press, India; Namita Gokhale, writer and publisher; and Poonam Nigham Sahay, associate professor at Ran-

THE ZEITGEIST OF 2017

'Aadhaar' won the title on account of the buzz and debate it generated in 2017

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chi University. Gokhale said: "It has been exciting and stimulating to search the words that describe and exemplify the spirit of 2017."

The 'word of the year' was formally announced on Saturday at the Jaipur Literature Festival, where it was the subject of a panel discussion by Ashok Vajpeyi, Hindi poet and literary and cultural critic; Pankaj Dubey, writer, producer and director; Anu Singh Choudhary, writer, translator and filmmaker; and Chitra Mudgal, one of the leading literary figures of modern Hindi literature, among others.

"'Aadhaar' is a word long established in the Hindi language. However, it gained a new sense in 2010 as the shorthand name for the Aadhaar card i.e. the unique identification numbers introduced by the then government of India. This new sense of the word has been at the centre of the national conversation in 2017 as moves to mandate expansion of the programme to link with bank accounts and phone numbers have resulted in significant debates around the merits and risks of the programme. 2017 has been the year of several high-profile court cases and reports of data leaks which have influenced public opinion," the Oxford University Press said in a statement.

Sivaramakrishnan V, managing director, Oxford University Press, India, said: "We are delighted to announce the very first Oxford Dictionaries Hindi Word of the Year. We received an excellent response... to our invitation to suggest a word that had resonance with the masses in 2017."