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News in brief

In the shadow of terrorism

“People in the west have absolutely no idea what terrorism is. We have a 9/11 or 7/7 if not every day then every second day in Pakistan,” says Tahir Malik, a retired army major whose wife was killed in a suicide bomb attack.

Malik is speaking in a *Dispatches* film that follows the police and people of Islamabad for one year as Pakistan’s capital battles to overcome an unprecedented wave of terrorist attacks.

More than 3,500 people have been killed in suicide blasts in Pakistan in the past three years. Only a few years ago, attacks in the capital were rare, but disparate terrorist groups are increasingly working together and Islamabad has become their ultimate target.

Deadly attack

Filming began in October 2009 when the city was reeling from a wave of bloody suicide attacks. The Islamabad offices of the UN World Food Programme were the first to be hit.

Malik says: “Nothing can



Amber (left) was badly injured and her best friend killed in a terror attack

prepare you for an act like this. You drop your wife off in the morning and at 2pm you bring a dead body home. Gone, just like that.”

Two weeks later the campus of the Islamic University was targeted. Eighteen-year old Amber was badly injured in the double suicide attack in freshers week. The deadliest bomb targeted the girls’ cafeteria, and Amber’s best friend, 17-year-old Aqsa, did not survive.

Amber, who spent several

months in hospital, describes seeing her friend slumped on the chair beside her, the smoke and the smell of flesh and blood. But Amber and her other friends who survived the blast remain determined to finish their education.

In the film, *City of Fear*, Aqsa’s father tells Amber: “What happened to you, this war, whoever did it, is not a Muslim. Their purpose is to stop you from studying because you are our future. If you get scared by these people and give up education, they will win.”

Short of resources

Kaleem Imam, police inspector-general, has the job of hunting down those responsible for the increasingly bold attacks.

“We are short of human resources and we are short of materials, but that doesn’t stop us from doing what we’re doing,” he vows.

City of Fear is directed by BAFTA winner Chris Eley.

Even now nowhere feels safe, schools remain shut and Western companies are closing their offices as persistent bombing threatens to destabilise Pakistan’s fragile civilian government.

City of Fear is on Channel 4 on 22 November.

LAURA JOHNSON

KELLY MATTISON

VENDOR BIBS

From this week city centre customers of *The Big Issue in the North* will be buying their weekly magazine from vendors wearing smart new yellow and blue bibs that replace the old orange ones, some of which have fallen into the hands of rogue vendors who aren’t registered. The new bibs apply only to Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield. Vendors elsewhere do not wear bibs. Support for the new bibs comes from Liverpool City Council, Liverpool Business Improvement District, Leeds City Council and Safer Leeds.

LAW CENTRE REPRIEVE

South Manchester Law Centre has cleared the first hurdle in its battle to avoid closure after a judge said the way the Legal Services Commission had cut its contracts, leading to an 80 per cent loss of funding, could be unlawful. The centre, which has offered free legal advice on a range of issues for 35 years, will now be able to make its case at a judicial review next month.

SAMBROOK’S A WINNER

Cumbria-based writer and campaigner Clare Sambrook is the winner of the prestigious Paul Foot Award for Campaigning Journalism 2010. Sambrook won the award and a prize of £5,000 for investigating, reporting on and campaigning against the government policy of locking up asylum-seeking families. Much of her work has appeared in *The Big Issue in the North*. Last week Sambrook also won the Bevins Prize for Investigative Journalism.

COMMUNITY BOBBY

Inspector Damian O’Reilly of Greater Manchester Police has been named community police officer of the year at Jane’s Police Review Gala Awards for his work in Gorton and Levenshulme. Born and bred in the area, he was praised for generating a sense of local pride as he and his team fought crime and anti-social behaviour. O’Reilly has also been praised for his work with the Roma community in the area.

access to a toilet

voice in developing societies – women, the elderly, children, people with disabilities – are the worst affected by poor sanitation. The result is that sanitation and hygiene education remain at the bottom of political, health and community agendas.

Sanitation is key

In 2000, member states of the United Nations committed to achieving eight Millennium Development Goals aimed at halving the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015.

Now as World Toilet Day approaches in the tenth

anniversary year since the signing of the Millennium Declaration, it’s estimated at current rates of progress the target to halve the proportion of people living without sanitation will not be met globally until 2049 – and in sub-Saharan Africa not until the 23rd century.

“Without addressing the issue of sanitation as a key element of human development, we’re not going to get very far with other efforts for poverty eradication and economic development,” warned Vellemen.