

## Swiss clock that calls to prayer

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**A Swiss-made clock has been specially developed to call Muslims around the world to prayer.**

The Belal prayer clock is equipped with software and a satellite location system which enables it to calculate the time of daily prayers from anywhere in the world.

It took three years of research to develop the Belal timepiece (IPTEQ)

Its unique feature is the sound of a muezzin, or public crier, who summons the faithful to prayer in Islamic countries.

The clock, manufactured in canton Bern, aims to alert Muslims visually and by sound to the five daily prayer times in strict accordance with the rules of the Koran.

Belal, who was a companion of the Prophet Mohammed, was the sixth person to accept Islam and devote himself to Allah's cause. He became the prophet's muezzin and is said to have possessed a clear and resonant voice.

### **Sun determines prayer times**

The timepiece, shown at the annual World Watch and Jewellery Fair in Basel, takes into account that the times of prayer are determined by the position of the sun and consequently vary depending on location and date.

For example, the first prayer of the morning – the Fajr – takes place at different times depending on whether the believer is in London, Bern or Riyadh.

The company behind the design, development and sale of the clock is IPTEQ (Innovative Prayer Time Equipment) of Geneva.

One of the shareholders is the Moser-Baer company (Mobatime) of Sumiswald in canton Bern, where the clock is manufactured.

Mobatime is perhaps best known for its industrial time systems, notably the clocks that hang in Swiss railways stations.

"The Belal can be used in the home, office, in hotels or at prayer locations," IPTEQ director Jean-Claude Zraggen told swissinfo.

"We also see many other applications to integrate our clock, for example in embassies, on board ships or at airports," he added.

### **On-screen display**

Information is not only announced automatically in sound but also visually. Below the analogue time display is a high-resolution TFT (thin film

transistor) display, which features two adages or sayings linked to the Koran.

Known as hadiths, they relate to the teachings or acts attributed to Mohammed. They are automatically changed every day from a collection of around 800 stored inside the clock's high-tech brain.

The clock, which has a certificate of conformity issued in December by the Islamic Centre of Geneva, also draws attention to other optional prayers or important moments in a Muslim's day.

These include an indication of the start of abstinence during the period of Ramadan or during a voluntary fast and a signal for the period of day during which prayer is forbidden.

Some 70 clocks have so far been made, with IPTEQ director Jean-Claude Zraggen satisfied with the interest shown by visitors at the BASELWORLD show.

### **Interested distributors**

"Basel was very important for us to have the first feedback from the market. Our idea is to find distributors in each country and I'm quite happy now because we've already found some who are very interested in the product," he said.

During the next two years, IPTEQ hopes to sell between 500 and 800 pieces. It will first concentrate on the Middle East (about 75 per cent of sales) and Europe (25 per cent), particularly France and Britain.

These are markets where the competition is "practically non-existent", the company says. It later plans to sell the prayer clock on the Asian and American markets.

IPTEQ also intends to develop and sell other models, particularly for mosques and travellers.

swissinfo, Robert Brookes in Basel

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IPTEQ: <http://www.ipteq.com/index.htm>

Mobatime: <http://www.mobashop.ch/>

BASELWORLD: <http://www.baselworld.com/about/news.asp?Path=1,29,304&hasFlash=1>

Encyclopaedia of the Orient: <http://www.i-cias.com/e.o/>