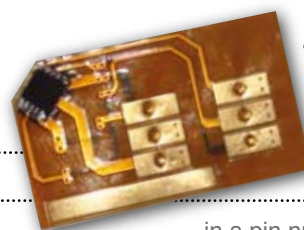


LAB TEST

Hala Dialler



Just slot this little bad boy under your Sim card and suddenly international calls get a lot cheaper

AVAILABLE: Kalaam Telecom, www.kalaam-telecom.com, Tel: 8001 8008

IF you want to make cheap international calls on your mobile, you previously had three options. 1: Pay the extortionate standard rates of most mobile service providers; 2: Get a special package that is only marginally cheaper than the standard rates; or 3: Buy an international calling card, endure the pain of typing in endless card numbers, pin numbers and phone numbers, and then face four second delays and echoes during the call.

However, Kalaam have introduced a cutting-edge technology to the equation that is totally new to Bahrain, so they asked us to try it out. And our impressions are good.

Kalaam provides you with a special super-slim chip that simply slots underneath your sim card in your phone, and once the chip is activated you can start using it. Simple as that!

Or is it?

Because of the extra chip involved, there is an initial delay of several seconds involved when making any call, as the call is diverted to the new service provider. This is different to making local calls, as there is no delay when just using your local sim card.

However, this can be overcome. You can change the settings on your phone to use the normal sim card when making local calls, and remove the delay. Then you can

just change the settings back to the Hala chip when you want to make an international call. This is a bit fiddly, but if you aren't afraid of technology you can learn to do this with relative ease. It is also necessary if you don't want to waste your Hala credit on local calls.

So, if you are gadget-savvy and make a lot of international calls and are keen to save on phone bills, then the Hala card is a must-have. Once you've learned how to switch the service provider settings on your phone, changing between the two is quick and easy. Then, making international calls is a lot easier than the unbelievable rigmarole of typing in a long card number, putting

in a pin number, and then dialing an international number, with country code.

And the savings are immense. We made close to an hour-long phone call to a friend in the UK, and only used just over half of the 3BD credit that was given to us by Kalaam for the test-drive. I dread to think what that call would've cost on a standard mobile contract, but I think ten times the amount would be a conservative estimate!

PROS

- Unbelievably cheap international calls
- no hidden charges or costs.

CONS

- Slight delay in local calls, but that can be easily overcome



HALA CARD EXPERIENCE-METER

