

Paper as charcoal



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MANILA, Philippines - Here's a new product created out of scrap paper: charcoal briquette. Briquette is a mixture of charcoal made from various materials molded in various sizes and shapes with the use of a binder or starch. The new briquette has been named " Don King Uling" by its creator, Florentino Montemayor Jr. , a retired official of a multinational corporation and now barangay councilor of Batong Malake, Los Banos, Laguna.

Don King Uling is a take-off from a noted donut because the briquette is shaped like the popular baked product. It is made of old newspapers, kraft papers, cartolina and other types of used paper except the glossy ones. The materials are soaked in water overnight, shredded and compacted with the use of a pressing machine also devised by Montemayor. " The product is used as a substitute for wood as charcoal fuel," he said. The project is particularly focused on informal settlers and poor barangay residents who use charcoal stoves. " Since early last year when Don King Uling was conceived, more than a hundred families have been using the briquettes as more pressing machines were fabricated and sold at affordable cost to barangay settlers following the Los Banos Banamos Festival, which commemorated the historic town's 394th anniversary last Sept. 17. Batong Malake officials have been helping sell the pressing machines to further spread its use.

They said, as quoted by Kathleen Lungub, a student at the UP Los Banos College of Development Communication: " With the growing number of briquette users, we do not only help the people save money; we also help in the conservation of forests in the long term. " At least once a week, the Batong Malake committee on livelihood headed by Montemayor, together with councilor Allan Leron and Janos Lapid, do house-to-house visits in

communities to demonstrate and promote the use of portable, easy-to-operate pressing machine and scrap paper briquette.

One of the technology's users, Merlie Casipo, 53, said: " Mas magandang gamiting and papel na panggatong dahil mas maningas. Nakatipid ka na dahil mabilis mag-apoy, nakabawas ka pa ng basura. " A paper briquette is sold at P10 per kilo (eight pieces). One needs only four briquettes to cook a cup of rice. Don King Uling is cheaper than a kilo of wood charcoal (P20). The project has been supported by the Los Banos-based Department of Science and Technology-Forest Products Research and Development Institute (DOST-FPRDI).