CARPOOLING is hardly a novel idea, but some Raffles Junior College (RJC) students believe they have devised a business plan to make it happen on a large scale.

They aim to help the environment by cutting the number of cars on the road and help the community by reducing travel costs for participants.

The students are taking part in a Singapore extension of the global competition called Sage World Cup, which promotes innovation and social awareness among the young.

The annual competition, started by Students for the Advancement of Global Entrepreneurship (Sage) and first held in 2003, was brought to Singapore by the Singapore Management University's (SMU's) Initiatives for Social Enterprises club.

The RJC students aim to test their carpooling plan at the Nanyang Technological University campus.

The idea is to set up a user-friendly website which will allow users to book carpooling appointments online. Profits will be made from advertising on the webpage.

Students from RJC and five other junior colleges will take part in the competition, under the umbrella of Sage Singapore. It was launched last week at SMU by Parliamentary Secretary (Community Development, Youth and Sports) Teo Ser Luck.

SMU's Initiatives for Social Enterprise club believes that social entrepreneurship represents the future of business, as shown by the number of leading companies in the world that have adopted social aims.

Giving an example of a past winner of the competition, Sage founder Curtis DeBerg, who was at the launch, talked about the students of Ateneo de Manila University in the Philippines, who recycled non-biodegradable tarpaulin from billboards to manufacture bags, providing jobs and income for locals.

Other winners mentioned include a Nigerian high school that implemented a postal service in its village.

The participants will also be guided by SMU mentors. Said Ms Quah Yi Tong, 19, of Catholic Junior College: "The competition is well-known internationally, and a win would be highly prestigious."

Mr Lin Ying Bo, 18, of RJC attributes his enthusiasm for this venture to his interest in business, and the fact that it allows his team to execute a business plan, going beyond the planning stages that most competitions offer.

The winner of the Sage Singapore competition will be sent overseas to represent the Republic in the Sage World Cup, where they will be judged by a panel of influential business leaders on the creativity, viability and social impact of their businesses.

Sage targets youths because, as Mr Teo said, they possess "the idealism and dare-to-dream mentality" needed to come up with exciting entrepreneurial ideas.

They are also less adverse to risk and failure.

He added that most social development funds are currently under-utilised, and budding entrepreneurs can apply for endowments for their business ventures from, say, the Young ChangeMakers grant.

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