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The solar-powered smart compacting BigBelly bin is on trial along a 500m-stretch at Orchard Road. ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG

SINGAPORE - Rubbish bins could one day be used to measure how clean the air is or how many people pass by an area.

Mr Jason Kumar, co-founder of technology firm Terra Sol, said advances in sensor technology have made bins smarter, and he does not rule out having bins with those capabilities.

His company on Tuesday (Nov 15) launched smart bins that can act as Wi-Fi hot spots, turning the stretch between Wisma Atria and Mandarin Gallery into a free Wi-Fi zone for pedestrians.

The bins are also solar-powered, have sensors that tell their cleaners how full they are, and come with compactors which give each bin up to eight times the capacity of a normal bin, among other features.

Such intelligent bins are gaining traction here, said Mr Kumar.

"There has definitely been more market awareness and interest here since we first brought in the bins at the start of last year," he said.

Currently, the firm is running five separate trials with close to 20 bins in locations such as Fusionopolis in Buona Vista and CleanTech Park in Jurong West. It has sold 15 units in the last year.

Otto Waste Systems, another company which markets smart bins, said it has seen growing interest as well.

Mr Sanderson Soh, Otto's senior sales manager, said people were initially less receptive to such bins due to their cost. But as the bins have shown they can help raise productivity, "more organisations have come knocking on our doors wanting to find out more".

Mr Soh also noted a rise in inquiries for smart bins, by 50 to 60 per cent over the last nine months.

The firm is currently conducting a one-month trial at Singapore Management University with two smart bins. It has also conducted trials at places like Changi Airport, Botanic Gardens, Sports Hub and Hong Kah North Community Club.