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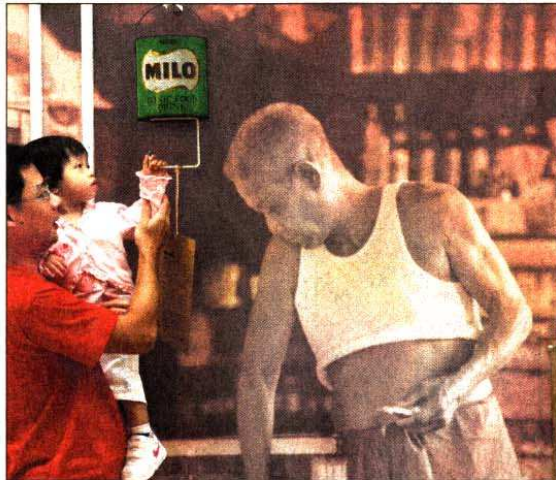
By SUMATHI V SELVARETNAM

SINGAPOREANS are becoming more aware of their heritage, and feel that understanding their roots better will increase their sense of belonging.

These key findings came from the results of the 2006 Heritage Awareness Survey, released at the launch of the Singapore Heritage Festival yesterday.

The Heritage Awareness Index, which tracks heritage knowledge, appreciation and action, rose by 20 per cent between 2002 and 2006.

Eighty-seven per cent of those surveyed between June last year and the middle of February this year said heritage was important in "rooting" them more firmly to Singapore.



FLASHBACK: One-year-old Ng Zi Xin tugs at a Milo tin, used to store change in old shops. It is one of the exhibits at the festival.

More than 70 per cent felt they could learn more about heritage by visiting museums and participating in heritage activities.

Ninety per cent of them also said heritage preservation would become more vital as Singapore becomes a global city. A total of 903 Singaporeans were surveyed.

This year's festival, which runs till July 29, takes place in various locations islandwide.

Speaking at the launch in

Suntec City, Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts Lee Boon Yang emphasised the importance of storytelling in keeping culture, values and traditions alive.

"We are training students and teachers in the oral history methodology so that they too can start documenting the history of their schools, parents and grandparents," he said.

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A WINDOW TO THE PAST: Old photos and exhibits at the launch of the Singapore Heritage Festival at Suntec City yesterday. This year's festival takes place in various locations islandwide till July 29.

ST PHOTOS: EDWIN KOO