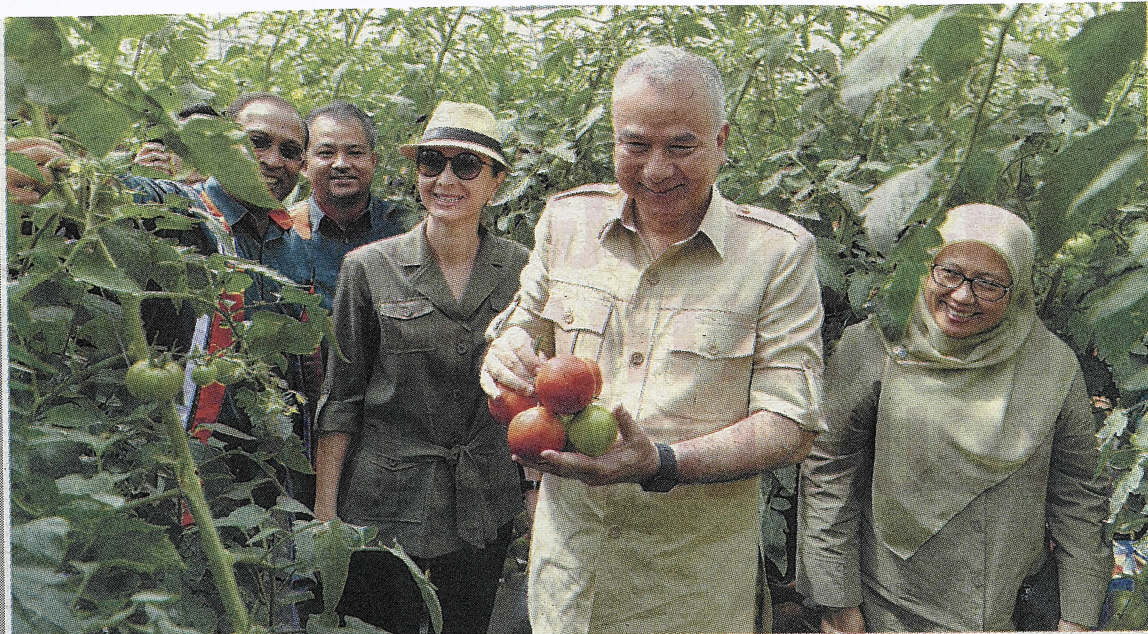


## FRUITFUL

... Sultan of Perak Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah and Raja Permaisuri of Perak, Tuanku Zara Salim (third from left) look at freshly picked tomatoes at a farm after launching of the Collection, Processing and Packaging Centre, managed by Agrote Business (M) Sdn Bhd, at the Kinta Highlands yesterday.



# 31 pits still burning at illegal factory

SUN - 10

> 'DOE can only seal locations after fires are put out'

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**BUKIT MERTAJAM:** The Penang Department of Environment (DOE) is unable to seal the 31 pits at an illegal factory in Sungai Lembu as the fires within are still burning.

State DOE director Rosnani Abdullah said her officers can only seal the pits and the facility when the fires are put out.

"There still are fires burning in the pits," she said.

The pits are used by the factory to burn sawdust which are then used as components for making carbon filters.

Anti-graft busters had earlier this month raided the factory and subsequently detained Penang Environment, Welfare and Caring Society Committee chairman Phee Boon Poh and two factory senior managers.

The three have been released while the owner has reportedly said the factory will cease operations.

The factory appeared to be deserted when *theSun* visited it yesterday.

Steel gates were installed and a forklift placed at the entrance to prevent people from entering the factory compound.

DOE found no traces of pollution there in 2015.

This was revealed after the minutes of a Seberang Perai Municipal Council meeting was declassified and distributed to the media in a press conference by Chief

Minister Lim Guan Eng yesterday.

The May 6, 2015, minutes stated there was no pollution as barriers were installed atop the factory to prevent smoke and ash from escaping.

"The DOE can support the operation of the factory if the sawdust burning activity was made in a closed environment and safety devices were used," the minutes said.

"In addition, the operator of the factory has to obtain the licence from the council and the DOE will see to additional related conditions like the process and the suitability of the site."

Referring to the minutes, Phee, who has returned to work after being on medical leave, noted the factory operator possessed the licence while previously operating in Alma, Bukit Mertajam, but it was cancelled after moving and the operator did not apply for a new one.

He said the factory (at the current site) was more than 500m away from residential areas, and called for a detailed investigation into pollution claims as well as claims that residents of Kampung Sungai Lembu became ill, due to pollution from the facility.

The operator had applied to rezone the land from agriculture to industrial but the application was rejected.

He said agriculture land was for agro-based industries and not for industrial use.

"The building plan application was also rejected due to the land status."