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Longer school hours may keep children safe: PM

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KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has suggested that a lengthy, single school session could be considered as a means to keep children safe.

He said the move would see the school session start at the normal time and finish at 4pm, enabling working parents to be at ease as to the whereabouts of their children and, at the same time, keeping children in a safe and conducive environment.

"A lot of parents would be at ease, if their children are at school compared to if the children are at home where there is nobody to keep an eye on them," he told reporters after chairing an Umno Supreme Council meeting here yesterday.

He said since the regular school hours finish at 1pm, the additional three hours could be used by the children for their

co-curricular activities, homework and other activities, to keep them occupied until the parents pick them up after work.

"If it can be done, it will be a massive exercise. But the parents would be relieved to know that their children are safe," he said.

Abdullah, who is also Umno president, made the suggestion when asked if parents should be held liable if their negligence or omission led to their children being hurt.

On the Nurin Jazlin Jazmin case, he said the party is satisfied police are doing all they can to hunt down and bring to justice those responsible for her death.

He said that following the case, the party's supreme council was also of the view that there is need to revive and strengthen the Rukun Tetanga movement all levels, down to the grassroots.

The RT would enable its members to keep an extra eye on the movement of people, particularly outsiders, in their

neighbourhood as well as provide better protection and security.

He said a combination of ways is needed for children to be kept safe, but the burden should not only be placed on the shoulders of the police.

Abdullah stressed that the onus is also on the parents to keep their children, particularly the young, safe and secure.