

Mayan apocalypse mania grips Russia

Officials try to calm fears as Russians buy up emergency supplies before the Mayan calendar runs out on Friday

Miriam Elder in Moscow

guardian.co.uk, Monday 17 December 2012 09.40 EST



The Chechen president, Ramzan Kadyrov, told people via his website that it was useless to buy candles before the Mayan apocalypse. Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

The apocalypse is surely near when Ramzan Kadyrov emerges as the voice of reason.

The ruthless leader of Chechnya is among dozens of Russians officials, priests, doctors and psychiatrists aiming to calm an anxious populace frantically preparing for the end of the world later this week.

"People are buying candles saying the end of the world is coming," Kadyrov said in comments published on his official website last week. "Does no one realise that once the end of the world comes, candles won't help them?"

For more than a month, Russians around the country have been buying up candles and matches, salt and torches in an effort to outsmart the apocalypse some believe will come when the Mayan calendar runs out on Friday.

In the coalmining town of Novokuznetsk, shelves nearly emptied of salt stocks last month as the city's residents prepared to ride through the end of the world. "60 tonnes were bought in one week," Yelena Zuyeva, a city official, said last week in comments carried on the local administration's website. "Today all trade companies are working and are ready for any level for consumer activity."

Online forums have been buzzing with people exchanging tips on what to eat after the

entire human population is wiped out on Friday. "If I'm not mistaken, [Russia](#) makes all sorts of dehydrated products that are rich in all kinds of vitamins," a user named Yelena Portnenkova wrote on a forum called "How to live? What to eat?" on VKontakte, the Russian version of Facebook. "Yet filling a garage with stocks of food is not just pointless, but dangerous. If the apocalypse comes, then crowds of hungry, angry, terrified and horrified people will sweep into your garage just because they suspect they might find something edible."

Government officials have been called upon to calm fears. Vladimir Puchkov, Russia's emergency situations minister, urged Russians to call his ministry's hotline if they had any fears. His deputy, Sergei Anikayev, added: "We don't believe in the 'end of the world' fable," adding hastily: "But we're ready to help people with any emergency situation."

With the end of the world just days away, Russians have moved from buying stocks to thinking long and hard about where to be when the lights go off. In Moscow, an underground bunker built during the second world war for the Soviet dictator Josef Stalin has offered its services: "We invite you to survive the apocalypse on 21 December in Bunker-42 on Taganka at 65 metres underground!" a note written in ominous red on its website cheerily reads.

Alexander Kolomeyets, the deputy head of Russia's Association of Independent Psychiatrists, lamented the apocalypse-mania that has gripped his country. "There are people who are prone to mental epidemics and I think that most of them are in our country," Kolomeyets said in an interview with local media in the far eastern city of Khabarovsk.

"What's happening in our country can be a lot scarier than the end of the world – so any negative information sticks. The more primitive the society, the stronger it lends itself to psychological epidemics. I think in this case our country isn't very civilised."

More from the Guardian

[What's this?](#)

[Chinese authorities arrest dozens for spreading Mayan apocalypse rumours](#) 17 Dec 2012

[The moon landings were faked \(and other science confessions\)](#) 13 Dec 2012

[Queen finally finds out why no one saw the financial crisis coming](#) 13 Dec 2012

[Mayan apocalypse looms large in the week ahead](#) 16 Dec 2012

[Kim Jong-un: North Korean dictator and Time readers' person of the year](#) 16 Dec 2012

More from around the web

[What's this?](#)

[13 Things a Movie Theater Employee Won't Tell You](#) (Reader's Digest)

[No amount of Clorox will kill these viruses: An easy guide to keeping your computer secure.](#) (DeVry University)

[Awesome or Atrocious? 4 Bizarre Car Accessories that Used to Be Cool](#) (Allstate Blog)

[Sea Rises Five Feet, Leaves 70% of Venice Submerged](#) (Bloomberg)

[10 Beloved Brands Gone Forever](#) (BusinessNewsDaily)

© 2012 Guardian News and Media Limited or its affiliated companies. All rights reserved.

;