Russia will start giving its first drug approved to treat COVID-19 to patients next week, its state financial backer said, a move it hopes will ease strains on the health system. Russian hospitals can begin giving the antiviral drug, which is registered under the name Avifavir, to patients from June 11. Avifavir, known generically as favipiravir, was first developed in the late 1990s by a Japanese company later bought by Fujifilm as it moved into healthcare. RDIF head Kirill Dmitriev said Russian scientists had modified the drug to enhance it, and said Moscow would be ready to share the details of those modifications within two weeks. Japan has been trialling the same drug, known there as Avigan. It has won plaudits from Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and $128 million in government funding, but has yet to be approved for use.