Avifavir

- 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.