ARUBA—Aruba is prepared now that seventeen people died of the H1N1 virus (the Mexican flu) in Venezuela last month. Wilmer Salazar of the Directorate of Health called especially the high-risk groups in for vaccination.

Apart from Venezuela, the virus is also circulating in Colombia, Brazil, Mexico and the United States. It involves the same virus as the flu that caused a worldwide pandemic in 2009 and 2010, and according to an estimate by the World Health Organization (WHO) the death toll of 18,500 people. As yet not one case of the virus has been registered on the island, said Salazar.

High-risk groups are children up to four years, pregnant women, people with a chronic disease, and senior citizens (60+). These groups are advised to report for vaccination.

“The vaccine of 2012 on the island will expire in June,” said Salazar. The new vaccinations will be available in September at the family doctor or the Department of Contagious Diseases.

“We are alert,” Salazar emphasised. “We have a team of doctors ready that will take immediate measures if it suspects a case of the virus. Samples will immediately be taken for research and diagnosis, certainly if the complaints include breathing problems.”

As yet no warning has been given worldwide for a pandemic. “Nevertheless, we are alert at the airport and in the harbour,” said Salazar. “We also emphasise that people are to be alert and for example cover their mouth when coughing.”

Originally the H1N1 virus comes from pigs. It’s a subtype of the flu virus influenza A, but it has many subtypes, such as the Spanish flu that caused millions of victims worldwide around 1918.

Also the Mexican flu is a combination of various subtypes of the virus. The pandemic in 2009 mostly affected those suffering poor health through other causes.

For that matter a study from The Lancet last year revealed that the number of deaths estimated by WHO is possibly fifteen times higher.

From left: Rotterdam Mayor Ahmed Aboutaleb, Minister of Home Affairs and Kingdom Relations Ronald Plasterk, St. Maarten Minister Plenipotentiary Mathias Voges and Curacao Minister Plenipotentiary Roy Pieters at the Dutch Caribbean Connect gathering in Rotterdam Saturday.

Immigrants deserve a face, a platform, says Aboutaleb

ROTTERDAM—It is important to give immigrants who positively contribute to society a platform where they can receive recognition, said Rotterdam Mayor Ahmed Aboutaleb who opened the Dutch Caribbean Pearl Award ceremony in Rotterdam Saturday.

“For too long Dutch Caribbean people have been the focus of negative news in the media. Too often the weekend incidents have made the front page of the Dutch Telegraaf newspaper. We have to give the beautiful things of this community a platform, a face so we decided to create one,” said Aboutaleb.

This is the second time the Dutch Caribbean Pearl gala was organised in Rotterdam, a city that is home to more than 20,000 people from the Dutch Caribbean. Both times, Aboutaleb has given the initiative his full support.

“You have to celebrate and claim your party. No one will organise it for you, so you have to do it yourself. We have to celebrate our strength. Dutch Caribbean people have much to contribute to our society, and what is more beautiful than to give special attention to these talents and role models,” said Aboutaleb.

The mayor spoke about shifting power relations in his city where the number of immigrants are close to outnumbering the Dutch native people. “Demos-