

THANDEKA GQUBULE

A STANDARD Bank branch in Uganda has been drawn into the illicit money scandal involving the Vatican Bank.

A branch of Malaysia's Standard Chartered in the Ugandan capital, Kampala, has also been linked to the investigation.

The Vatican Bank has been embroiled in a money-laundering scheme, and Pope Francis is committed to cleaning up the scandal. He has appointed South Africa's Cardinal Wilfred Napier to a 15-member task team reform the bank.

International banking giants JPMorgan Chase and HSBC have closed the Vatican's accounts around the world to reduce risks of money laundering.

This week a Ugandan woman, Esther Nobasa, appeared in the Mbarara District Court, 18km outside Kampala, for receiving large sums of money from the Vatican Bank.

Stanlib and Standard Chartered have confirmed that their officials in Uganda will take part in hearings into how the money was transferred on February 13 this year from the Holy See to accounts under their management.

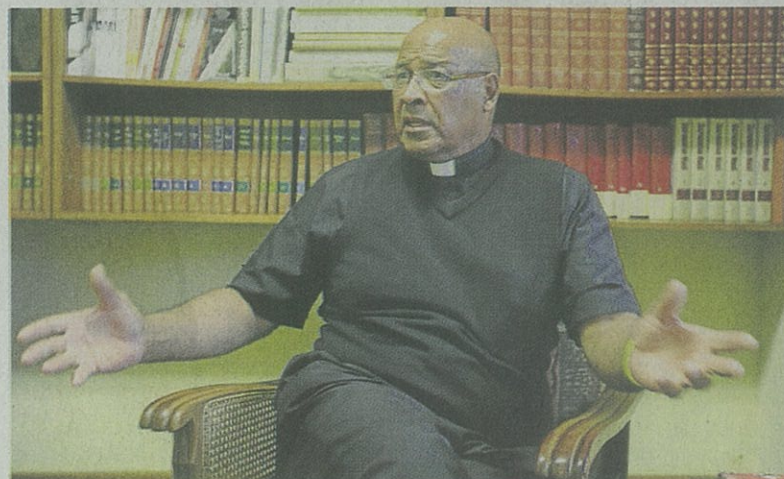
The scandal at "God's Bank" has set tongues wagging in church pews in Uganda after Nobasa was arrested and appeared in court on Wednesday. With 15.3 million members, Uganda has the sixth-largest Catholic population in the world.

The investigation began after Uganda's head of police, Kale Kayihura, received a message from Interpol regarding the unauthorised "transfer" of two billion Ugandan shillings (about R7.7-million) from the Vatican Bank to four banks in Uganda — two local banks and two South African banks.

The Vatican police also sent a message to Kayihura on July 7.

Addressing a gathering of East African and Southern African police, Kayihura said he had received a message from the Vatican and promise of assistance from Interpol.

He said money was wired from the



CLEAN-UP: South Africa's Cardinal Wilfred Napier has been appointed to a task team to reform the Vatican Bank
Picture: TEBOGO LETSIE

Vatican cash scandal's SA bank link

Ugandan officials of Standard Bank to explain unauthorised transfers

Vatican Bank using various bank swift codes to seven accounts in four banks in the Mbarara district. The funds were withdrawn immediately.

The Vatican Bank is not a traditional bank and is officially called the Institute for the Works of Religion. Vatican spokesman Federico Lombardi told the Financial Times this week that the bank was more of a "deposit and transfer" institution because it did not extend credit or loans.

Uganda's police chief received a message from Interpol regarding an 'unauthorised' transfer

According to press reports, the Vatican police asked the Ugandan government to hunt for those who had withdrawn the money.

The 33 000 accounts in the 72-year-old Vatican Bank include 3 000 accounts belonging to African and South American individuals, pro-

jects and institutions.

The bank accounts are identified only by a number, and the institution is notoriously secretive, refusing to publish names of account holders or financial statements.

Since the Italian financial authorities began investigating, damaging claims of money laundering have arisen.

The Financial Times said the Vatican Bank had assets second in size only to those of the United Nations and "has been reported to hold more than \$200-million [about R2-billion] in US treasuries".

In June this year Pope Francis issued a papal decree creating an investigative pontifical commission to investigate the bank.

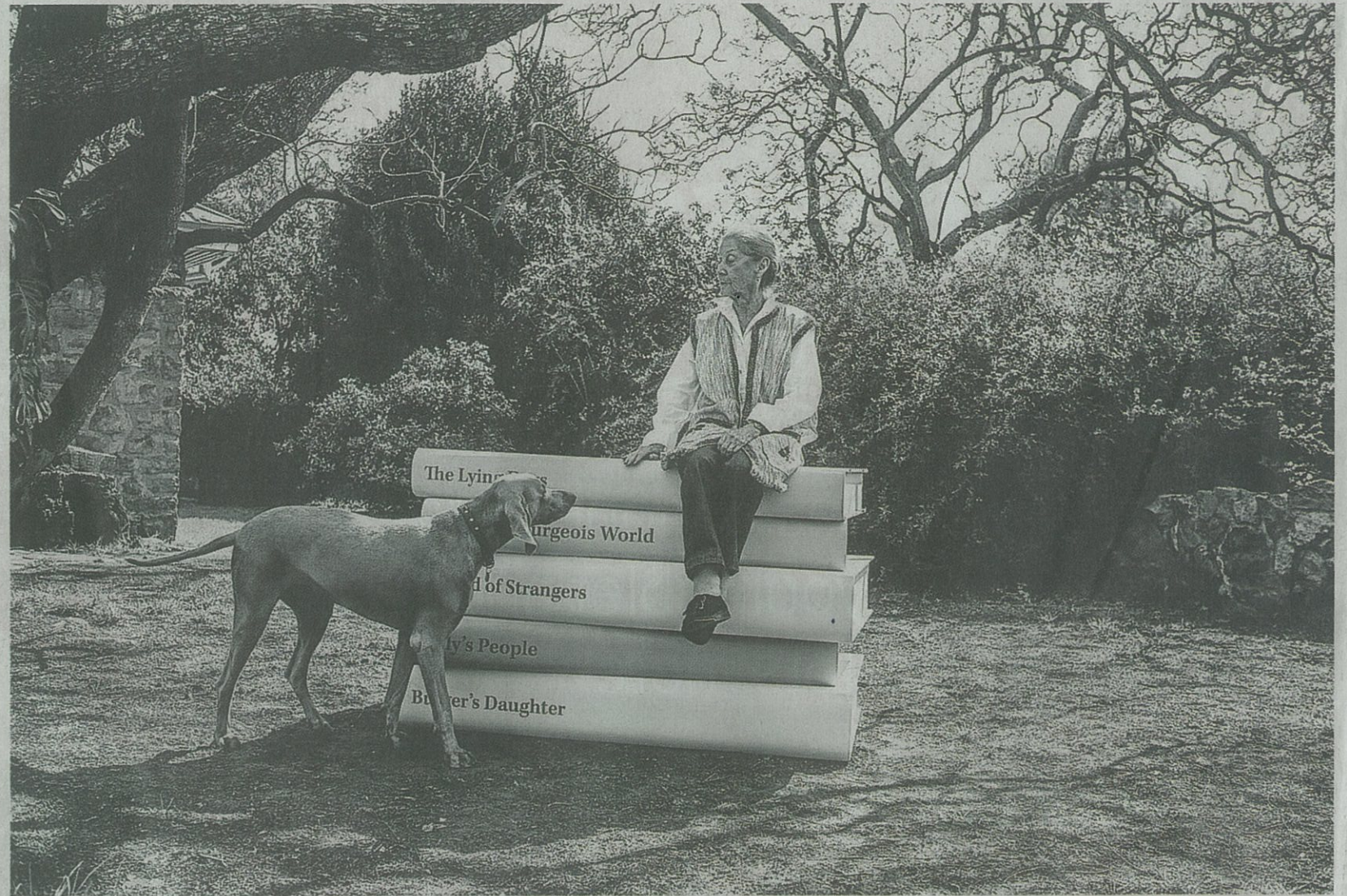
Last month, when the bank invited 60 journalists to its premises, its president, Baron Ernst von Freyberg, said investigators were scrutinising about 1 500 accounts a month to ensure compliance with international money-laundering standards.

He said the bank was a "well-managed and clean financial institution that suffers from a bad reputation linked to old scandals".

In July, Freyberg announced the resignation of two leaders of the bank, director Paolo Cipriani and his deputy, Massimo Tulli. The resignations came three days after a leading Vatican official who held accounts at the bank, Nunsio Scarano, was arrested by Italian authorities on suspicion of smuggling €20-million out of Switzerland into Italy.

According to The Tablet, an international Catholic weekly publication, "the arrest of Scarano, a former banker and now a chief accountant at the Administration for the Patrimony of the Apostolic See, is said to have especially perturbed the pope, who has often warned clerics to be wary of 'money worshiping'".

Today the pope will lead the world in a prayer for Syria in St Peter's Square. Napier also called for a day of prayer this week.



PEDESTAL OF PROSE: Nadine Gordimer and her dog as photographed by Adrian Steirn at her home in Parktown, Johannesburg, for the 21 Icons project

A giant of SA literature in black and white

THEKISO ANTHONY LEFIFI

NADINE Gordimer once smuggled her book *Burger's Daughter* to former president Nelson Mandela when he was jailed on Robben Island for treason.

Mandela in turn smuggled a thank-you letter to the world-renowned author, who won the Nobel prize for literature in 1991.

The letter is a "treasure" for Gordimer, 90, who was one of the first people Mandela visited after his release from jail.

The two icons formed a formidable friendship that has survived for decades.

Although Gordimer was aware of injustice in South Africa at a very young age after witnessing the harassment of her parent's domestic worker by the police, she considers herself a writer first rather than a political activist.

Writing is the only job she has ever done. Even during trying times as a single mother she did not

consider trading her craft for anything — except possibly dancing, her first love.

To her, being a writer is a voyage of self-discovery. Her latest book, *No Time Like the Present*, is at the printers and will soon hit the shelves.

"I have no objection to people now and again reading books with an electronic device, as long as they read. I think they miss something because the body of the book in your hands is important, and turning the pages and going back. And the book doesn't make you dependent upon any electricity or a battery," said Gordimer, a founding member of the Congress of South African Writers.

The new book is available in digital format.

Gordimer is the fourth Nobel laureate to be featured in the 21 Icons project, conceptualised by filmmaker and photographer Adrian Steirn. Mandela, former president FW de Klerk and Archbishop

Emeritus Desmond Tutu all won the peace prize.

Despite the prestige of the Nobel prize, Gordimer has the curious distinction of not having been officially acknowledged for her achievement at home.

"Our [then] president Mr De Klerk didn't even send any message

I have no objection to people now and again reading books with an electronic device

of congratulation," she said, adding that she was not certain whether to take this as a compliment.

Steirn photographed Gordimer in the garden of her home in Parktown, Johannesburg, sitting on a pile of giant copies of her books, under a jacaranda tree.

The portrait reflects her tremen-

dous contribution to South African and world literature and shows how, through the political and moral themes she wrote about, she placed the country's injustices, cultural complexities, conflicts and people in the consciousness of the world.

Australian-born Steirn said he wanted to create an *Alice in Wonderland* theme.

"Nadine is a tiny woman and the juxtaposition of her sitting on these enormous books really worked for me," Steirn said.

The signed original photograph of Gordimer will be auctioned at the end of the series and the proceeds donated to the Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital, a specialist paediatric academic and tertiary referral hospital.

Tonight at 6.57pm, SABC3 will show a short film of the photo-shoot, in which Gordimer discusses the creative arts, the banning of her work by the apartheid regime and how she met Mandela.