

ones reeled out their disappointment with the services

Olumide Tawose of the Department of Mathematical

he was able to raise the internally-generated rev-

and well-wishers for assisting in repositioning the university and putting up

sities on various collaborative training programmes leading to Ph.D," he said.

this building and I will personally make sure I see to that.

Death of hotel staff in police custody raises dust in Benin

THE police in Edo State are having a torrid time explaining the demise of 28-year-old Chibuike Edeh in their custody, writes BANJI ALUKO.

ACCORDING TO the account of the police, family and friends, Chibuike Edeh's journey to the land of no return was quite fast and unexpected. He had left home for work at Protea Hotel on Friday, March 13, only for his corpse to be discovered at the University of Benin Teaching Hospital (UBTH) the following day. Chibuike's demise kick-started when he was handed over to the police at the Adesuwa Police Station in Benin by the management of Protea Hotel after he was alleged to have stolen N42,000 from one of the rooms of the hotel.

Spokesperson for the Edo State police command, Joseph Edoighiawerei, who spoke with newsmen on Monday, provided an explanation of how Chibuike met his death after his arrest. He said the late Chibuike confessed to the crime and led police to a spot he allegedly kept the money on the fence that demarcates the Protea Hotel and the NNPC mega filling station located off Sapele Road in Benin.

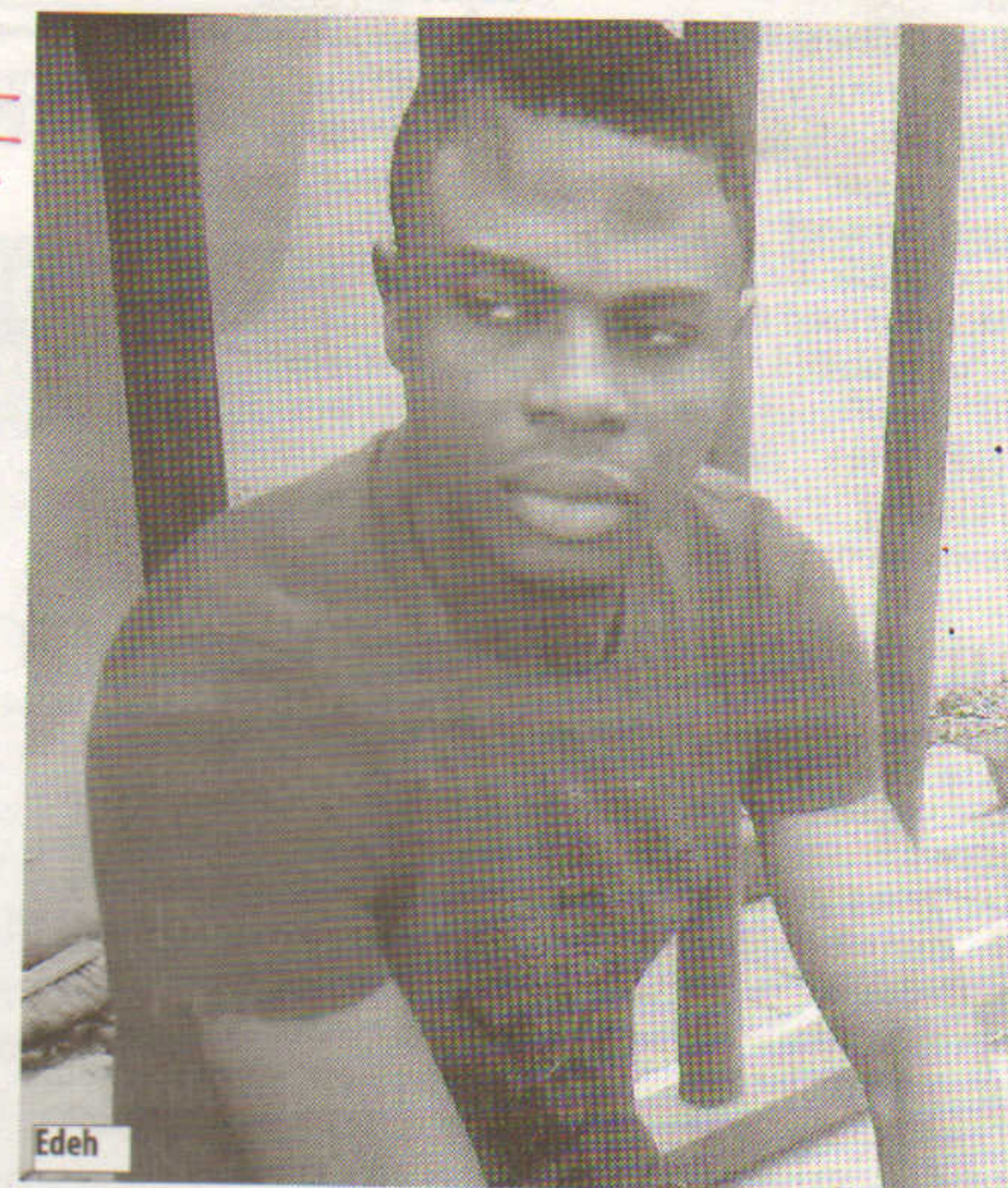
Edoighiawerei, who de-

nied police's complicity, said Chibuike died as a result of injuries sustained after he was knocked down by a car while trying to escape from the scene. He added that the driver of the vehicle had been arrested but refused to give further details about the car and driver.

"A case of stealing was reported by the management of Protea Hotel, where the deceased was working and he was arrested and taken to Adesuwa police station. While there, he made a confessional statement, admitting to stealing the money and even the theft was captured by Protea's CCTV camera.

"He also told the police that the money was still much intact, between the fence of the hotel and the NNPC mega filling station. The IPO and the CSO of Protea Hotel went with him to recover the money and on getting to Protea Hotel, he took to his heels. In the process, he was knocked down by a Toyota Camry car and as I am talking to you, the car and the driver who knocked him down are at the Central MTD," Edoighiawerei stated.

Family members, friends and neighbours of Chibuike, however, took to the streets of Benin on Monday, protesting what they described as unjust and callous killing of a young man. Numbering about 100, mainly from the late



Chibuike neighbourhood at Second Freedom Street, Off Stadium Road, Benin, the protesters stormed the premises of Protea Hotel. Security was beefed up at hotel, but the protesters forced their way in without causing any damage to the property.

Dressed in black attire and carrying placards and photos of Chibuike, they took their protest to the Edo State Government House and the premises of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) before arriving at the Protea Hotel. They barricaded the entrance to the hotel and prevented staff and lodg-

ers from gaining entrance or exiting the hotel.

According to the brother of the deceased, Chibuzo, the family was, last Friday, informed of his arrest by the police and asked to provide the stolen N42,000 and an undisclosed amount for his bail. He added that by Saturday, Chibuike could not be found at the police station or at the hotel. He said while this was ongoing, the family received an anonymous call from a man, who asked that they should meet him at the UBTH, where they discovered Chibuike's corpse.

"We were at this (ho-

tel) premises when a man called that we should meet him at UBTH. When we got there, we were shocked to discover that my brother was dead. The policemen and the CSO of this hotel killed my brother. We observed that he had a broken neck, burns on his back and several cuts on his body.

"My brother has been working for close to three years and the so-called CSO claimed that he (deceased) was not capable of stealing. We are appealing to the state government to help us in this matter. We were told that the car dragged my brother for several metres and that the driver ran away," he said.

Mother of the late boy, Mrs Christiana Edeh, added that her late son expressed apprehension when she visited him at the police station on Friday. She said: "Around some minutes past 9.00 p.m. on Friday, my son called me on phone and told me that he had a problem at his place of work. I became worried because he used to close around 4.00 p.m.

"So, I told him that I will come and see him the next day. We took the money to the police station at about 12noon but were told to return by 3.00 p.m. We were called at 10 .00 p.m that his body was at the hospital. He told me he did not collect any money. The

hotel management has not told us anything now.

"I last saw my son at the police station. There was no injury on his body. We were told the IPO was not around. My children went back and were told that my son was not there at the police station. They said he was taken to Protea Hotel. I earlier saw my son's name on the police notice board, but his name was not there around 3.00 p.m."

When asked about how Chibuike's body ended up at the UBTH, DSP Edoighiawerei pointed out that the aspect remained a mystery that would be unravelled through investigation.

"That is for investigation to unravel. I'm not detailed for the investigation and I would not know. Of course, if a vehicle knocked somebody down and even results in taking the life of that person, I don't imagine that the body parts of that person will still be very much complete.

"Police investigations are not done on the pages of newspapers or on the tube of television. Since there is already a case that is pending, anybody that has any material information that will help in unraveling the mystery surrounding this issue should come forward to police. A case file has already be opened on the matter and aspersions should not be cast on police," he said.