

by **Adila Matra**

DHRUV Malhotra is an insomniac and doesn't understand the logic behind sleeping. He gets charged up every night and wanders around the streets armed with a Mamiya 6x7 and a tripod. That's how 'Sleepers' was born.

As many as 41 photographs on display at the Photink gallery reflects well on Malhotra's fascination towards the night and its inhabitants. Picture a 27-year-old photographer who was interestingly a student of economics, wander around cities such as Mumbai, Jaipur, Goa and Delhi with the sole aim to photograph sleeping figures. Rickshaw-pullers, construction workers, wedding helpers — the photographer has given each one of them a place in his show.

Says Dhruv Malhotra about his tryst with the night, "I started with a project called 'Noida Soliloquy' in 2007, where I went around Noida at night, during what I would call an insomniac part of my life. I began to find the idea of photographing manmade urban landscape along with human presence fascinating".

The photographs, since they were born out of a film camera, do not disappoint you. The highlights, the colours, the depth — everything is just perfect. "Digital cameras make a photographer lazy," Malhotra says.

Even while you gaze at the photograph of one of the sleepers in Goa, unperturbed by

Frozen frames of endless nights

the photographer's presence, in a peaceful slumber on the bulwark of a beach, with a cross lodged into the ground beside him, you wouldn't for once guess that the picture needed a two hour exposure. But that's all Malhotra needed for a cigarette break! A few have woken up during Malhotra's failed attempt for a silent intrusion, but he has photographed them anyway. "Cops from Goa were kind enough to allow me to go about taking photographs but I wasn't that lucky with the Mumbai cops. Once I was surrounded by 10 of



Malhotra's roving camera records how time stands still for people who sleep in public spaces

them and had to move in a circle flashing my press card," Malhotra says.

Here's a man who likes the night, who enjoys the slow yet meticulous way he can work through the hours of darkness with little disturbance. "The longer you look into the night, the more your eyes adjust, and the more you can see. I like the idea of unveiling what is concealed in its darkness". And so he has. Excellently.

'Sleepers' will be on till March 2 at Photink gallery, Faiz Road, Jhandewalan; 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.