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SLOW SMOKING THRILL IN ASIA'S BEST LOUNGE: BERTIE HONG KONG HOSTS FIRST-EVER CSWC QUALIFIER

The slowest race on Earth met the electric energy of Hong Kong nightlife — and the result was unforgettable.



For the very first time, the Cigar Smoking World Championship by Oliva Cigars touched down in Hong Kong, and it did so in true style — hosted by none other than Bertie, recently crowned *Best Cigar Lounge in Asia* (Cigar Trophy 2024).



This stunning venue, known for its sophistication and elite cigar culture, became the latest arena in a global tournament where calm nerves and steady hands reign supreme. And what a debut it was.

THE STAGE WAS SET — THE SHOWMAN ARRIVED



Making the night even more special was the presence of Marko Bilić, the charismatic founder of the CSWC, whose passion and larger-than-life energy lit up the room as he guided first-time competitors through the rituals and rules of what's been called *"the slowest race on the planet."*



"I have been very much impressed by the ladies and gentlemen competing for Hong Kong," Bilić said. "The event was of a very high quality and competition was tense through the end, with an excellent final time!"

It was a night fueled by more than just determination — the crowd sipped on exquisite Samai Rum, the first premium rum from Cambodia, making its debut on the Hong Kong stage. The pairing with the official competition cigar, specially created by Oliva, was a perfect match in taste and tempo.



THE RACE BEGINS — THE CLOCK TAKES OVER

From the very first puff, the room filled with anticipation. The first elimination came in a dramatic twist — just five minutes into the race. But that didn't rattle the rest. Competitors fell into a meditative rhythm, controlling every draw with precision.



At 1 hour and 35 minutes, only seven smokers remained, gripping their cigars and their nerves as the tension built. When the final twenty minutes arrived, just three warriors were left. In the end, one name rose above the rest: Mr. Brian Chau, who set a new Hong Kong record with 1 hour and 48 minutes, and earned the honor of representing his city at the 2025 CSWC Grand Finale in Split, Croatia.



A NIGHT TO REMEMBER — A CITY TO WATCH
For Hong Kong's cigar community, the event was more than a competition — it was a celebration of passion, camaraderie, and a promising beginning of a new tradition.



"I am hugely proud of welcoming such an amazing competition in Bertie Hong Kong," said Eric Piras, the visionary behind Bertie. "It definitely consolidates our trophy as Best Cigar Lounge in Asia!"

Even more inspiring? None of the participants had ever entered a cigar competition before. But after experiencing the thrill of slow smoking, every single one vowed to train all year and return even stronger for the 2026 edition.



Hong Kong is now officially on the map. The torch is lit. The smoke has cleared. And the countdown to Split has begun.

