I WAS A
TEEN REBEL

TV host Pornsak purposely failed his exams to try and get out of S'pore

REPORT: KAHRO KIM PEK
khairul@thepaper.sg

With a schoolboy's rebellious streak, Pornsak told him he was leaving Singapore on a holiday, but he ended up making it a permanent move.

He initially rebelled against his foreign land. Burnt his exams and was even chased out from his guardians' homes.

Yet, Pornsak, 27, has overcome his tough childhood to become a Mandarin radio DJ and a television host.

No small task considering that he learnt Chinese only after he moved to Singapore from Thailand.

Now, he is one of the fast-rising TV hosts on the Chinese entertainment scene. With Lee Tong, he has co-hosted the programmes Go Green, Campus Superstar series and the upcoming variety show Go Go.

While Pornsak was enrolled the best newcomers at the Star Awards in 2007, Lee Tong, 25, has been nominated for two Variety Show Host in next Awards this year.

But while he has made his name here, Pornsak said the journey was hardly smooth.

When he was 13, his parents brought him to Singapore for a Christmas holiday. While there, he had a school trip to the zoo and he was puzzled why they did not return to Bangkok.

Then, his parents took him to buy a school uniform and textbook.

"The next thing I knew, I was in a classroom attending lessons," he said.

He didn't speak Mandarin English and no one in South View Primary School spoke Thai.

"I've been chased out of my guardians' homes because I was so playful. And I would forget to turn off the taps or the lights. Whatever I touch would most probably break too!" - Pornsak (left)

"I would forget to turn off the taps or the lights. Whatever I touch would most probably break too!"

He went on to报废Japanese College and then Singapore Management University (SMU).

"I have a very blessed life. At every important stage in my life, I've had someone coming to my help." His mentor and "tien jie de" (elderbrother) was SMU Professor Margaret Chan - the former Masters of the Senate.

"She said to me: 'You've been chased out of my guardian's homes because I was so playful.'" - Pornsak said.

It was then that Pornsak came out of his shell and discovered a new interest in hosting.

Off-camera, Dr Chan took care of Pornsak like he was her son. She would buy him dinner when she saw him out with her family and swung by his place to drop in.

Radio

Pornsak later won a DJ competition organised by Radio 101.3 and joined the station full-time.

At the station, he got help from fellow deputy Andy Lam, who helped him overcome his "Thai-accented Mandarin" by instructing him to "say slow and slow by slow".

His next mentor was a guest speaker at the station, Dr Tan Swee Goon, a Chinese physician who impressed upon him how flexible the entertainment industry can be and encouraged him to take a degree in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM).

In three years' time, Pornsak will become a TCM Practitioner.

In front of the camera, he banishes his trademark grin and is replaced by heartfelt tears.

But off-camera, during this interview, he suddenly becomes into a more serious mood.

He said: "I'm a typical product of the TV host circuit. My job as a TV host is to be friendly and sunny, and hosting is a great way to express the innermost side of me."