

## *The Northeast Asian International Ferry Project (Summary)*

Ikuo Mitsuhashi, Senior Fellow, ERINA

Kazumi Kawamura, Researcher, Research Division, ERINA

Last year, ERINA published the *Vision for the Northeast Asia Transportation Corridors*. This was the culmination of several years of research by people from countries and regions within Northeast Asia (hereafter referred to as NEA).

One of the main aims of the Vision is to promote smooth connections between transport corridors and maritime transport routes across the Japan Sea and the East China Sea, amongst others, in order to encourage international trade in continental NEA, particularly its landlocked areas.

One means of creating such connections would be the establishment of a network of international ferry services. This paper outlines the current situation, problems and measures that could be taken with regard to building a ferry network in NEA.

1. There are more than twenty international ferry routes in NEA. However, links are poor between Japan and two of the corridors leading to the Japan Sea (or *Tonhe*, in Korean): No. 3 corridor (the Suifenhe Corridor) and the No. 4 corridor (the Tumen River Corridor). Therefore, setting up convenient cross-Japan Sea links between Japan and these two corridors

in the form of ferry services is a matter of the utmost urgency.

2. The current functions of ferry services in NEA are not quite the same as those in Europe or domestic services within NEA, which not only carry passengers and cargo, but also assist in the movement of vehicles to the counterpart country. Vehicle movement is the most important function of European and domestic ferry services. However, apart from the Kampo ferry (sailing between Shimonoseki in Japan and Busan in South Korea), ferry services in NEA are not involved in vehicle movement, due to various national immigration policies. Even the Kampo ferry carries only a small volume of traffic, due to the strict regulations placed on it. Therefore, we recommend that restrictions on international vehicle movement in NEA be eased considerably in the near future, in order to strengthen regional economic integration.

3. Finally, we recommend that efforts be made to further Japanese people's understanding of the ideal shape of a borderless society in NEA because, in comparison with such continental countries as Russia, China and Mongolia, Japanese attitudes toward the concept of borderless communities are still rather negative.