

Japanese visitors sizing up Lawrence

By SHARON LAMBERT
J-W Staff Writer

As Kansas University students flock to Allen Fieldhouse tonight to root for a Jayhawk victory against the University of Missouri Tigers, five Japanese visitors will join them. The group may not understand the hoopla or even the game of basketball, but they'll surely get a taste of KU enthusiasm.

The delegation, representing the Japanese city of Hiratsuka, arrived in Lawrence Monday afternoon to explore the possibility of establishing a sister city agreement with Lawrence. The first item on the hectic itinerary was a tour of Helen Foresman Spencer Museum of Art on the KU campus, followed by a tour of Lawrence.

Lawrence's sister city advisory board is coordinating the group's visit, according to Carol Shankel, chairman of the board.

"WE'RE REALLY trying to point out our national and international connections so they'll see we're not just a provincial little town," Shankel said.

Today's agenda included visits to city hall, the Journal-World, Hall Kimbrell Environmental Services, Oread Laboratories,

and lunch at Alvarmar Country Club, sponsored by the city and Kansas International. On Wednesday, the group will meet with numerous KU officials and spend the morning on campus before touring Packer Plastics, shopping downtown, and attending a reception. Finally, Thursday's schedule will feature Lawrence High School, Quail Creek Elementary School and Haskell Indian Junior College.

Shankel first approached Hiratsuka officials with the sister city idea in 1987 during a visit to the Japanese city, about 60 kilometers southwest of Tokyo. At the time, they were not prepared to develop such a relationship, Shankel said. Almost three years later, they decided to reconsider.

THE DELEGATION is comprised of Masaru Yui, deputy mayor; Yoshinori Yanagawa, vice speaker of the city council; Sadayuki Takahashi, a member of the chamber of commerce and industry; Hiroko Matsui, a member of the board of education; Yoshimi Tomita, chief secretary of the city; and Masahito Endo, secretary of the city. They are staying at the Eldridge Hotel.

The delegation's visit to Lawrence is en-

tirely exploratory, Shankel stressed.

"This is not a signing. If they decide to sign an agreement, we'll plan another visit," she said.

In October, Lawrence signed a sister city agreement with Eutin, West Germany. It is the only such agreement Lawrence has.

Hiratsuka has a population of 242,000 and is the site of Tokai University, a private institution with an enrollment of more than 25,000 students. The city also is developing a high-tech research branch of Kanagawa University that will have about 6,000 students.

BECAUSE HIRATSUKA is a university town, the delegation is particularly interested in observing the relationship between Lawrence and KU, according to Tomita. KU student Hiroshi Murao interpreted Tomita's comments, saying, "This university city is similar to Hiratsuka. (Tomita) wants to see the connection between the university and the town."

As for the basketball game, Tomita seemed eager for the experience although he admitted basketball was not very popular in Japan. Most people prefer baseball and soccer, he said.



appe
aid
ntil a
er in
her
st
th

(Staff photo by Ben Bigler)

Kazuko Tripp, a docent for Helen Foresman Spencer Museum of Art, gives a delegation from Hiratsuka, Japan, a tour Monday afternoon. In the background are Carol Shankel, who chairs Lawrence's sister city ad-

visory board, and interpreter Hiroshi Murao, a Kansas University graduate student. The six-member Hiratsuka delegation is in Lawrence to consider a sister city agreement between their town and Lawrence.

