

  **Karachi** : After a day's breather, bulls were back at the stock market on Friday. The KSE-100 index recovered all of the losses of Thursday, gaining 290.19 points. For the first time, the index crossed the 23,000 points level on closing basis on Friday, to settle at 23,037.32 points.

The day's trading, however, was marred by depressing low turnover, both in terms of volume and value.

Market participants said that besides the Ramazan effect, which usually witnesses low investors' interest, the shortened trading timings during the holy month, also results in low turnover.

The investors also decided to remain on the sidelines, after the unexpected market fall on Thursday, said a senior broker.

He also asserted that the country's equities had already reached their historic valuation of nearly 10 times the earnings. Acting like panic-prone herd over the Thursday's fall and rumours of gloom and doom doing the rounds, punters and short-term individual investors were first to offload equity worth \$2.17 million on Friday.

Mutual funds, the asset managers of public money also thought discretion to be better part of valour and sold \$1.91m worth shares to take profit.

The situation was salvaged by the foreign investors who made net purchases of \$2.17m worth shares on their favourite heavyweight oil and gas sector.

Thus, the stock prices of PPL, PSO and POL and OGDCL saw an upward movement. Among the local participants, companies and banks were also bold buyers of equity worth \$1.38m and \$0.61m, respectively.

The star performer for the day was Engro Corporation, which closed at upper circuit or 5 per cent higher than the previous day's close, in a little over an hour of start of trading on Friday. Investors rushed to buy Engro stock, after the company confirmed through its official notice to KSE that the government had diverted 60MMCFD from Mari Gas to its fertiliser plant which has enabled the company to start production of urea from both its plants.

Analyst Khalil Usmani stated that the banking sector remained in the limelight after the country entered into new IMF Extended Fund Facility. In anticipation of monetary tightening in coming months the investor confidence was seen in big banks, MCB, BAFL, UBL, and HBL, which closed up 2.7pc, 4.6pc, 1.3pc and 2.3pc, respectively.

Analyst Ahsan Mehanti commented that stocks closed at new all-time high amid thin trade in the earnings announcement season at the KSE led by oil, banking and fertiliser stocks on strong valuations.

In all, 334 scrips came up for trading with 228 gainers, 83 losers and 23 unchanged. Turnover plunged by 28pc to 125m shares on Friday, from 174m shares the previous day. Market capitalisation gained Rs73 billion to Rs5.597 trillion, from Rs5.526 trillion.

The top-10 volume leaders were PIA with trading noted in 15m shares up by 88 paisa to Rs9.87. It was followed by Bank Alfalah up 90 paisa to Rs20.58 on 11m shares.

Fauji Cement edged higher by 16 paisa to Rs14.20 on 9m shares; Maple Leaf Cement

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was in demand with 8m shares traded up by 75 paisa to Rs25.10. <p style="text-align: justify;">NBP gained 61 paisa to Rs49.92 on 4m shares; Engro Corporation hit the upper limit with gain of Rs8.22 to Rs172.75 on 4m shares; Pakistan Petroleum rallied by Rs5.70 to Rs241.65 on 4m shares and Engro Foods was up by Rs4.20 to Rs158.20 on 4m shares.

Courtesy: Dawn</p>