

Homo naledi

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In news– Recently, the **first ancient fossil of a Homo naledi child was found** in the Rising Star Cave, Cradle of Humankind, South Africa.

Background–

A new member was introduced to the family tree of humans in 2015. Fossil hominins from the Rising Star cave system outside Johannesburg, South Africa, were found to belong to a previously unidentified hominin species, which was then named Homo naledi.

Key findings –

- A team of researchers led by Professor Lee Berger, a palaeoanthropologist from South Africa's University of the Witwatersrand, has revealed the first partial skull of a Homo naledi child, also from the Rising Star cave.
- They have estimated that the child died almost 250,000 years ago, at the age between four and six years old.
- **The child has been named "Leti" after the Setswana word "letimela", meaning "the lost one".**
- The "Underground Astronauts" is a nickname for the group of six scientists and excavators from the original Rising Star expedition.
- The new fossil area, U.W.110, where the child's remains were recovered, is in a very small passage in the Dinaledi Chamber.
- The Dinaledi Chamber is just one in a sub-system of chambers and passages within the larger Rising Star system.
- It is 12 metres away from where researchers originally excavated adult Homo naledi fossils.

The Rising Star cave system–

- It is located in the **Cradle of Humankind**, just outside Johannesburg.
- It's a large area that has many caves, cave systems and underground rivers, and it has been famous for important fossil finds since the 1920s.
- It is a complex network of tunnels, passages, squeezes and chambers, some of which interconnect.

Family tree of humans-

