

## China upgrades Everest road ahead of Olympic torch

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(AP) A blacktop road leading to the Mount Everest (Chin: Qomolangma) base camp was completed and will be used when the Olympic torch is taken to the peak, Xinhua reports. Workers spent 10 months widening the 67-mile road, evening the surface and installing guardrails at dangerous spots. *"The upgraded highway ... will provide a safe path for drivers, tourists and mountaineers, and facilitate torchbearers [taking] the Olympic flame to the top of the world"*, the report said. Environmentalists have criticized blacktopping the road, which begins in Tingri town Shigatse prefecture, arguing it would damage the permafrost in the ecologically fragile area. Xinhua said the project did not damage the environment, citing the chief of administration for Mount Qomolangma State-Level Nature Reserve.

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**Website:** [www.tibetinfonet.net](http://www.tibetinfonet.net)  
**Phone:** +44 (0) 20 300 206 33  
**Fax:** +49 (0) 2238 9494466  
**Email:** [tin@tibetinfonet.net](mailto:tin@tibetinfonet.net)