Phone scams are rampant in Hong Kong. Police received about 2,400 reports of such cases last year. Out of these, callers successfully conned money out of victims in 378 cases.

With a success rate of 16 percent, fraudsters are clearly doing much better than law-abiding telemarketers, whose general success rate was estimated to be around 6 percent.

The losses in these scams are getting bigger too. The HK$20 million case last year was recently overtaken by a HK$58 million one. Cases involving humongous losses seem to relate mostly to fraudsters claiming to be mainland law enforcement officers.

Of course, we should sympathize with the victims. But one cannot help but be baffled by why people keep falling for such scams despite wide publicity in the media and repeated police warnings. Why would someone deposit millions of dollars into an account and give the password to a stranger?

This is really something that makes people “百思不解” (bai3 si1 bu4 jie3). “百” (bai3) means “a hundred,” “思” (si1) “to think,” “to consider,” “不” (bu4) “no” and “解” (jie3) “to explain,” “to understand.” “不解” (bu4 jie3) means cannot comprehend. Literally, “百思不解” (bai3 si1 bu4 jie3) is “think a hundred times, still don’t understand.” It means “to remain puzzled after pondering over something,” “remain perplexed despite much thought.”

When you say something is “百思不解” (bai3 si1 bu4 jie3), you mean that it is difficult to understand, intriguing. The comment may also mean you suspect that there is something not right about a situation.

Terms containing the character “解” (jie3) include:

- 解釋 (jie3 shi4) – to explain
- 解決 (jie3 jue2) – to settle, to resolve
- 解體 (jie3 ti3) – to disintegrate
- 小解 (xiao3 jie3) – to urinate